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THE FUTURE OF U.S. FARM POLICY: FORMULATION OF THE 2012 FARM BILL

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

MARCH 9, 2012, SARANAC LAKE, NY
MARCH 23, 2012, GALESBURG, IL
MARCH 30, 2012, STATE UNIVERSITY, AR
APRIL 20, 2012, DODGE CITY, KS

Serial No. 112-30

Part 1

[GRAPHIC(S) NOT AVAILABLE IN TIFF FORMAT]

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THE FUTURE OF U.S. FARM POLICY: FORMULATION OF THE 2012 FARM BILL

FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 2012

House of Representatives,
Committee on Agriculture,
Saranac Lake, NY.

The Committee met, pursuant to call, at 9:00 a.m. (EST), at the Sparks Athletic Complex, North Country Community College, 23 Santanoni Avenue, Saranac Lake, New York, Hon. Frank D. Lucas [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Members present: Representatives Lucas, Goodlatte, Conaway, Gibson, David Scott of Georgia, Owens, and Pingree.

Staff present: John Goldberg, Tamara Hinton, Nicole Scott, Debbie Smith, Pelham Straughn, John Konya, Margaret Wetherald, Keith Jones, Mary Knigge, Jamie Mitchell, and Caleb Crosswhite.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. FRANK D. LUCAS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM OKLAHOMA

The Chairman. This hearing of the Committee on Agriculture entitled, The Future of U.S. Farm Policy: Formulation for 2012 Farm Bill, will come to order. I'll speak into the microphone and try to make that work.

Good morning, thank you all for joining us today for our first farm bill field hearing of 2012.

Field hearings are one of the most important parts of the farm bill process. Not only do they allow the Members of our Committee to hear directly from farmers and ranchers, but they give us a chance to see the diversity of agriculture across this great country.

These field hearings are a continuation of what my good friend and Ranking Member Collin Peterson started in the spring of 2010. Today we'll build upon the information we've gathered in those hearings as well as the 11 farm policy audits we conducted this past summer.

We used those audits as an opportunity to thoroughly evaluate farm programs to identify areas where we could improve efficiency.

The field hearings serve a slightly different purpose. Today we're here to listen.

I talk to producers all the time back in Oklahoma. I see them in the feed store. I meet with them in my town hall meetings. And of course, I get regular updates from my boss, Linda Lucas, back on our farm in western Oklahoma. But the conditions and crops in Oklahoma are different from what you'll find in New York or Illinois or California, for that matter.

That's why we hold field hearings, to meet farmers and ranchers from different regions who produce a broad range of products.

New York is a fitting place to kick off these hearings because of the variety of food produced here.

New York farmers produce a wide range of specialty crops that generate \$1.34 billion annually and make up 1/3 of the state's total agriculture receipts. New York ranks second in apple production, third in wine and grape juice production, and among the top vegetable producing states in the country. New York is also among the nation's top dairy states, and I'm pleased we'll hear from representatives of each of those commodities this morning.

While each sector has unique concerns when it comes to farm policy, I'd like to share some of my general goals for the next farm bill. First and foremost, I want to give producers the tools to help you do what you do best and that is to produce the safest, most abundant, most affordable food supply literally in the history of the world.

To do this we must develop a farm bill that works for all regions and all commodities. We've repeatedly heard that a one-size-fits-all program will not work. The commodity title must give producers options so that they can choose the program that works best for them.

And I'm also committed to providing a strong Crop insurance program. The Committee has heard loud and clear about the importance of crop insurance and we believe it is the cornerstone of the safety net. Today we hope to hear how we can improve crop insurance, especially for specialty crops.

Last, we'll work to ensure that producers can continue to use conservation programs to protect our natural resources. I'm interested to hear how producers in this area of the country use the conservation programs. I'm particularly curious as to your thoughts on how to simplify the process so they are easier for our farmers and ranchers to use.

Beyond those priorities, I know there are a number of universal concerns facing agriculture across the country.

For instance, my producers in Oklahoma are worried about regulations coming down from the Environmental Protection Agency and how they must comply with those regulations.

I'm also aware that the death tax is creating difficulties for farming operations. I want to hear how these Federal policies are affecting producers in the Northeast, but the main concern of our hearing will be how the farm bill affects specialty crops and dairy producers.

While specialty crops do not participate in traditional commodity programs, there are other Federal programs that play an important role in helping American fruit, vegetable and nursery crop growers to stay competitive.

These programs give specialty crop growers access to vital research programs and help protect their crops from pest and disease. Additionally, they provide assistance in maintaining and opening international markets and increasing consumption of the best fruits and vegetables in the world. I look forward to hearing your perspective on those programs.

For dairy producers, the ongoing discussion of dairy reform is of particular importance. The recent decline in prices coupled with rising production costs have once again demonstrated the need to improve and modernize our dairy safety net. While I do not expect unanimity among dairy industry participants, we never get unanimity among farmers in general, I do encourage all industry participants, producers and processors alike, to find some level of consensus regarding the type of reform that is needed.

The exact nature of the reform we include in the next farm bill will rely heavily on input we receive today and in future hearings. While there are several proposals that have been introduced, and we have had some level of agreement on a starting point for discussion, we do not claim to have all the answers.

With your help and guidance, we would hope to develop a comprehensive package of reforms that are fiscally responsible and balanced with regards to size and region.

Today we'll hear from a selection of producers. Unfortunately, we just don't have time to hear from everybody who would like to share their perspective, but we have a place on our website where you can submit your comments in writing to the House Agriculture Committee. You can find that--well, visit agriculture.house.gov/farmbill to find that place. And I believe we have, at the back of the room, some post cards that have that e-mail address on it so you can send your comments in.

As I said before, we don't have an easy road ahead of us, but I'm confident that by working together we can craft a farm bill that continues to support the success story that American agriculture is.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lucas follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Frank D. Lucas, a Representative in Congress
from Oklahoma

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While each sector has unique concerns when it comes to farm policy, I'd like to share some of my general goals for the next farm bill.

First and foremost, I want to give producers the tools to help you do what you do best, and that is to produce the safest, most abundant, most affordable food supply in the world.

To do this we must develop a farm bill that works for all regions and all commodities. We have repeatedly heard that a one size fits all program will not work. The commodity title must give producers options so that they can choose the program that works best for them.

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As I said before, we don't have an easy road ahead of us. But I'm confident that by working together, we can craft a farm bill that continues to support the success story that is American agriculture.

The Chairman. With that, I turn to my Ranking Member today, a gentleman from Georgia, Mr. Scott, for his comments.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID SCOTT, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM GEORGIA

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I'd just like to say, at the outset, what a wonderful part of the country this is. My first time into the Lake Placid, Saranac Lake area, and I must say it is a beautiful and very interesting visit. I certainly also want to say how great it is to be in the home and the districts of my fellow Representatives, Representative Owens and Representative Gibson, both of whom are just doing a marvelous job for you back in Washington.

As the Chairman clearly stated, we're here to hear from you. This is very important for us to hear. We are engaging in this farm bill at a very, very challenging time. Because we not only have to go back through to the 2008 Farm Bill, but we have to do it at a time when we're also faced with significant budget constraints. At the same time, we want to hear on the many areas of dairy, conservation, specialty crops, which are very, very important for this area of New York.

And also we want to hear from you about some of the regulations. All regulation is not bad, but at the same time we can sit in Washington in our wonderful offices and we can make great policy, but you have to let us know how it is working. We want to make sure that policies and regulations from the EPA and others are done in a way that allows our farmers and ranchers to be able to be productive, to be able to be profitable and not be over-burdensome. So we look forward to hearing from you on that.

Again, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much, and we look forward to a wonderful hearing.

The Chairman. The gentleman yields back, and as is the custom, we will listen to very brief opening statements from our two colleagues who represent New York on the House Agriculture Committee. I will first recognize Mr. Owens.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. WILLIAM L. OWENS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM NEW YORK

Mr. Owens. I thank you, Mr. Chairman. First let me say that I, and I think everyone in attendance here, is extraordinarily excited at this opportunity. This is unique and it allows northern New York and much of Vermont and other states that surround us to have an opportunity, as you said, to listen to the other side. And I think that that's very important.

As I was explaining to some of the folks I was talking to before the hearing, this is unique in that we have the opportunity to talk to people from throughout the country. This is very important that we get all perspectives into this farm bill.

You know, people don't recognize how important ag is in northern New York. It is an extraordinarily important part of what we do and what happens in our communities. It affects everything. It affects real property taxes, it affects the farm dealers. It has real impact on all of our lives on a daily basis.

I can only tell you how thankful I am that you are here, that we are here collectively. And in particular, I'd like to thank Mr. Gibson for his participation and his assistance in this process. And let me also say that I hope that as we listen today, we take those skills back to Washington with us. Thank you very much.

The Chairman. With that, the chair now recognizes Mr.

Gibson.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER P. GIBSON, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM NEW YORK

Mr. Gibson. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and let me just echo the comments of my colleague, Bill Owens. This is a historic day for this part of the state and indeed for our state in general. You know, the Chairman listed some of the data, that second in the nation with regard to dairy, second in the nation with regard to apples, third in the nation with regard to grapes, fifth in the nation with regard to specialty crops. We are a leader in the nation when it comes to farming in the agriculture sector of the economy.

And what Bill Owens mentioned is absolutely correct, it's that we're here today to listen and to work together. And you turn on the news today, doesn't matter what channel that you happen to turn on, whether it's Fox or MSNBC, you hear all this negativity about the status of the country and the Democrats and Republicans won't work together. Let me just tell you that I really value my friendship and the work that I do with Bill Owens. What we're doing here today, with regard to farming, is critically important.

As the Chairman mentioned, we're here today to make sure that we have the right input, because we're getting ready to write a bill this year that's going to impact this sector of the economy for the next 5 to 6 years and we need to get it right.

And so, Mr. Chairman, thank you for--you're only doing four of these across the entire United States of America, and the fact that you chose to come here, right here to Saranac Lake and into the Adirondack region, that really means a lot to me, and I want to thank you personally and professionally. I look forward to this hearing. I yield back.

The Chairman. The gentleman yields back his time.

The chair would request that other Members submit their opening statements for the record so the witnesses may begin their testimony and to ensure there's ample time for questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Peterson follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Collin C. Peterson, a Representative in
Congress from Minnesota

As we begin writing the next farm bill, we will hear directly from farmers and ranchers across the country on the issues they face every day.

Writing a new farm bill will not be an easy task most notably due to budget constraints. Everybody is being asked to do more with less and, it seems to me, that agriculture is being asked to cut even more than others.

The agriculture economy is the shining success of our nation's economy. We should not let those outside of agriculture try to mess up the only part of the economy that's actually working.

It is my hope that everyone in agriculture--producers in all regions, representing all commodities--come together. We need to be united to pass a good farm bill.

I thank the witnesses for making the time to testify hear today.

The Chairman. With that, I'd like to welcome our first panel of witnesses to the table: Mr. Eric Ooms, a dairy producer, Partner in Adrian Ooms & Sons, Incorporated, Old Chatham, New York. We also have Mr. Neal Rea, dairy producer, Chairman, Agri-Mark Dairy Cooperative, Salem, New York. We also have Mr. Jeremy Verratti, a dairy and crop producer, Verratti Farms, LLC, Gasport, New York. And with us also is Ms. Michele Ledoux, a beef producer, Adirondack Beef Company, New York.

With that, Mr. Ooms, begin when you're ready, please.

STATEMENT OF ERIC OOMS, DAIRY PRODUCER; PARTNER, ADRIAN OOMS &
SONS, INC., OLD CHATHAM, NY

Mr. Ooms. Thank you. I would like to start by thanking the Chairman, and Congressmen Peterson, Gibson and Owens for the opportunity to testify here today.

My father, two brothers and I are partners in a 450 cow dairy farm in Kinderhook, New York. We raise approximately 1,800 acres of corn, alfalfa and various grasses for our own herd as well as for cash crops. In 2011, we erected a grain dryer and storage to further diversify our business. My wife, Catherine Joy, and I have two children, Arend who is 4, Grace who is 2, and it's my goal as a farmer and a dad that my kids

have the same opportunities to work on a farm like I did with my dad.

Dairy farming has been on a veritable roller coaster for my family and everyone else in the dairy industry for quite some time. Dairy prices in 2009 caused indescribable pain in the industry. I think you all know this. While the past 2 years brought considerably better dairy prices to farmers, high inputs have tempered the average dairy farmer's optimism. This year's forecast shows softening prices paid to farmers, but our inputs are not going down. In fact, the price of fuel is rising. This is very concerning.

As we look forward, it's imperative to remember that we are now in a new paradigm of higher feed prices, so as policy makers and farmers, we need to keep this in mind as we build our farm business plans as well as formulate policy. It's also important to remember that while 2009 was a horrible experience, we cannot set policy for the next 5 years based solely on 1 year, but rather look at long-term trends. It is vitally important, as we go through this farm bill process, Congress not make things worse through their action or inaction.

While there are some programs and structural pricing aspects that need to be changed, some programs are working for dairy farmers. For instance, the Federal Order System has been working. To dramatically change or eliminate the Federal Order System would result in pricing and market chaos that is not needed. EQIP has proven itself to be a valuable and effective program and funding should be maintained at adequate levels in the next farm bill. The vision of Capper-Volstead may have not worked a hundred percent perfectly, but overall, my cooperative has played a key role in helping my farm market my product as well as working with my neighbors in filling its market while balancing those farms' production. We need to protect this relationship.

Credit is vital to any dairy farm. The cooperative structure of the Farm Credit System is in the long-term best interest of agriculture across the country. I urge no new regulatory burdens on Farm Credit. These are some policies that work reasonably well.

Here are some items that could be reworked: In a perfect world with perfectly balanced budgets, we should work to improve MILC as a safety net. However, if we eliminate MILC, what are we putting in its place? Margin insurance programs have promise. LGM is very effective, although it has a critical flaw of being inaccessible due to severe under-funding. If MILC is eliminated, there must be something workable and equitable to replace it.

Price discovery remains a concern. Theoretically, the CME and NAS Survey should work. However, with so little trading on the CME, producers are skeptical. Competitive pay price modeled after the former M-W could be a way to go here. USDA's recent rule on electronic price reporting is a step in the right direction. I appreciate the Committee's work in bringing this reform to reality. We will see in the next few months or years what tweaking is needed. The Price Support Program seems to have outlived its usefulness and it seems as though there is a national industry consensus to eliminate it. These savings could be used to bolster whatever safety net replacement vehicle the farm bill puts in place.

There are also some initiatives that we are not doing that we should be doing, such as since the 1960s, California has been fortifying milk with higher solids, non fat. With study after study showing that kids are not getting enough calcium, this is a common sense idea that we should have been doing for years.

The Dairy Security Act should be a major focus of farm bill discussions. Farm Bureau supports the Dairy Security Act because the supply management component of this proposal is voluntary. A voluntary supply management plan gives producers the freedom to make the best decision for their farm free of D.C. bureaucrats.

Before I close, I would not be doing my job if I did not at least mention the need for labor in agriculture, not just dairy. In addition to the DOL's proposed regulations for youth labor, just need to point out if there is to be an E-Verify bill there needs to be an agricultural guest-worker component. Overall, we need immigration and H-2A reform. While this is not in the jurisdiction of the Agriculture Committee or the farm bill, I urge each of you as Members of Congress to remember that we have a choice in America to import labor or import

food.

I applaud those Members of the Committee like Congressman Gibson and Congressman Owens, who are working toward that end and would urge all of you to help us in this endeavor.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to comment here today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ooms follows:]

Prepared Statement of Eric Ooms, Dairy Producer; Partner, Adrian Ooms & Sons, Inc., Old Chatham, NY

Good morning. I would like to start by thanking Chairman Lucas, Congressman Peterson, Congressman Gibson and Congressman Owens for the opportunity to testify here today.

My name is Eric Ooms. My father, two brothers and I are partners in a 450 cow dairy farm in Kinderhook, NY. We raise approximately 1,800 acres of corn, alfalfa and various grasses for our own herd as well as for cash crops. In 2011, we erected a grain dryer and storage to further diversify our business. My wife Catherine Joy and I have two children, Arend who is 4 and Grace who is 2. It is my goal as a farmer and a father that my kids have the same opportunities to work on the farm with their dad, like I did with mine.

In my role as Vice President of New York Farm Bureau, I would like to thank the Committee for holding one of its farm bill field hearings here in the Empire State where the economic impact of agriculture is well over \$4 billion to our state's economy. New York can boast about its diversity in food products as well as its national rankings for certain commodities. We are the second largest apple producer, third largest grape producer, fourth largest dairy producer and sixth largest vegetable producing state.

In addition, New York has become the new hot destination for yogurt processing with our local milk supply and proximity to major east coast populations. You are probably familiar with the recent success stories of Greek yogurt manufacturers Chobani and Fage, but New York has also recently welcomed the international corporations of Alpina and Mueller to our Genesee Valley Agri-Business Park in Batavia. Our own Upstate Niagara Milk Cooperative is also revitalizing the former Kraft plant in St. Lawrence County for Greek yogurt production. All this yogurt activity brings opportunity for more sourcing of local milk which New York farmers hope to meet.

I have been asked to talk about dairy policy as it pertains to the farm bill and I am happy to do so. Dairy farming has been a veritable roller coaster for my family and everyone else in the dairy industry for quite some time. Dairy prices in 2009 caused indescribable pain and suffering in the dairy industry, I think you all know this. While the past 2 years brought considerably better dairy prices paid to farmers, high inputs have tempered the average dairy farmers' optimism. This year's forecast shows softening milk and cheese prices paid to farmers, but our inputs are not going down. In fact, the price of fuel is rising . . . this is very concerning.

As we look forward, it is imperative to remember that we are in a new paradigm of higher feed prices. So as policy makers and farmers, we need to keep this in mind as we build our farm business plans as well as formulate policy. It is also important to remember that while 2009 was a horrible experience for all of us, we cannot set policy for the next 5 (or fifty) years based solely on one year, but rather look at long term trends.

It is vitally important as we go through this farm bill process that Congress not make things worse through their action or inaction. While there are some programs and structural pricing aspects that need to be changed, some programs are working for dairy farmers (even if they are imperfect):

The Federal Order System has been working and to dramatically change or eliminate the Federal Order System would result in pricing and market chaos that is NOT needed. I would further add, that component pricing in the Federal Orders has worked as well.

In regards to the Federal pricing formula, the current Class I price differentials are working. As a New Yorker, I would always like to see them a little higher and would welcome decoupling of Class I from manufacturing milk for price determination. I do realize that this is not politically realistic and would recommend Congress not adjust them significantly.

The continued inclusion and importance of dairy products in the School Meals Program. There is no better source of calcium, potassium, protein and vitamins A, D and B12. This is a win for kids and farmers.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) has proven itself to be a valuable and effective program that has helped every dairy farmer in one form or another meet their environmental regulatory obligations. These EQIP dollars are a smart and cost-efficient investment of taxpayer money for agriculture and the environment. EQIP funding should be maintained at adequate levels in the next farm bill.

The vision of the Capper-Volstead Act may have not worked out 100% perfect, but overall my Cooperative has played a key role in helping my farm market my product as well as working with my neighbors in filling niche markets while balancing those farms production. We need to protect this relationship.

Credit is vital to any dairy farm. Over 65% of ag credit in the Northeast is provided by the Farm Credit System. The Cooperative structure of the Farm Credit System is in the long-term best interest of agriculture across the country. I urge no new regulatory burdens on Farm Credit.

Those are some of the policies and programs that work reasonably well. Here are some items that could be re-worked:

Milk Income Loss Contract Program (MILC). In a perfect world with perfectly balanced budgets, we should work to improve MILC as a safety net for producers, but we are faced with real-world fiscal issues where money does not grow on trees. If we eliminate MILC, what are we putting in its place? Margin insurance programs have promise, and the Livestock Gross Margin insurance program (LGM) is very effective although it has the critical flaw of being highly inaccessible due to severe underfunding. Many producers would like to take advantage of LGM only to find themselves shut out of the program. If MILC is eliminated, there must be something workable and equitable to replace it.

Price Discovery remains a concern. Theoretically, using the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and National Ag Statistics Survey should work; however with so little trading on the CME, producers are skeptical, rightly or wrongly there is a real lack of faith. A competitive pay price modeled after the former Minnesota-Wisconsin pricing formula could be a way to go here. USDA's recent rule on auditing and electronic price reporting is a step in the right direction. I appreciate the Committee's work in bringing this reform to reality and we will see in the next few months or years what tweaking is needed.

Dairy Price Support Program (DPSP). DPSP seems to have outlived its usefulness and it seems as though there is national industry consensus to eliminate it. The savings could be used to bolster whatever safety net replacement program vehicle the farm bill puts in place.

Import assessment for dairy promotion. We certainly appreciate the inclusion of a \$.075 per cwt assessment on imported dairy products in the most recent farm bill. I would just remind the Committee that domestic producers are still paying \$.15 per cwt for the same promotion.

There are also some initiatives that we are not doing that we should be doing:

California Standards for Fluid Milk. Since the 1960's California has been fortifying milk with higher solids non fat. With study after study showing that kids are not getting enough calcium, this is a common sense idea that we should have been doing for years.

Farm Savings Accounts. This tax strategy tool helps farmers manage risk voluntarily by shifting income during profitable years via tax-deferred deposits into a savings account for withdrawal during less profitable years.

To comment on the Dairy Security Act, a proposed bill to reform existing pricing and safety net policies which should be a major focus of farm bill discussions. Farm Bureau supports the Dairy Security Act because the supply management component of this proposal is voluntary. If an individual producer chooses to limit production and the Federal Government wants to incentivize this, that is the producer's decision and we support that. Earlier, I mentioned the rapid growth of the

yogurt sector here in New York and the opportunity it brings for more sourcing of local milk. A voluntary supply management plan gives producers the freedom to make the best decision for their farm operation--whether that is to enroll in the voluntary supply management/margin insurance program or increase production to meet new market demand from yogurt processing.

Before I close, I would not be doing my job if I did not at least mention the need for labor in agriculture (not just dairy). One of the most serious issues facing farmers today is the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) proposed youth agricultural labor regulations. Despite a re-proposal of the parental exemption, farmers have no indication that our concerns will be addressed. Also, the hazardous occupations orders are set to be finalized in August and the original proposal places serious restrictions on the activities youth can do on the farm--things that are safe and part of the learning process on farms. How these will be finalized is a major concern. It is important that the Committee remain vigilant on both these issues to protect our family farms.

Similarly, if there is to be an E-Verify bill, there needs to be an agricultural guest-worker component. Overall, we need immigration reform and H-2A reform. While this is not in the jurisdiction of the Agriculture Committee or the farm bill, I urge each of you as Members of Congress to remember that we have a choice in America to import labor or import food. I applaud those Members of the Committee like Congressmen Gibson and Owens who are working toward that end and would urge all of you to help us in this endeavor.

I know the road to a new farm bill is long and time is short. NYFB stands ready to help you and Committee staff craft a thoughtful and workable farm bill to serve our family farms. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to comment here today. I would be happy to answer any questions you have at this time.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Rea, proceed when you're ready.

STATEMENT OF NEAL REA, DAIRY PRODUCER; CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD,
AGRI-MARK DAIRY COOPERATIVE, SALEM, NY

Mr. Rea. Thank you. Chairman Lucas and House Agriculture Committee Members, thank you for allowing me to testify today about dairy policy as it impacts me, my family, my farm, and my cooperative.

I'm Neal Rea. I own a dairy farm with my wife Carol, our two sons Thane and Travis, and our daughter-in-law Karen. Our dairy is located in Washington County, New York, and has been in our family for more than 200 years. It is because of the unselfish dedication of my family to the success of our dairy that I am able to serve as the Chairman of the Board for my cooperative, Agri-Mark, and on the Board of Directors for NMPF.

Agri-Mark is a dairy cooperative here in the Northeast with more than 1,200 members in New York and the New England States. Our members are proud owners of McCadam cheese, an award-winning cheddar produced in Chateaugay, New York, only a short distance from here. Our members also own our fabulous flagship brand, Cabot of Vermont. The 2012 Farm Bill is discussed at nearly every monthly Agri-Mark board meeting. Today's hearing is timely and greatly appreciated.

First, I would like to share our farm experiences of 2009 and the progression of events leading up to today. Our farm has very little new equipment. We rely on good used equipment which we maintain ourselves. We have milk cow facilities to house about 190 cows. Construction of these facilities was accomplished over many years with some approaching 45 years old. Our most recent addition was completed during the winter of 2010 and 2011. Our milking center is housed in our original stanchion barn.

As 2009 progressed, we've joined the thousands of dairy farm operations that became victims of negative cash flow. Our milk checks were considerably less than the corresponding bills. There were tears, sleepless nights, frustration and tension. Carol's philosophy was, and still is, that we must pay for cows' feed, we must pay for electricity, and we must pay for herd health. All other creditors will be paid as possible. Some months we would only pay a hundred dollars on a bill that was over a thousand dollars. Our own pay was delayed by months. It was extremely difficult to face our agriculture supply and service providers with partial payments knowing they too had to borrow huge sums of money to cover their operating expenses and deficit income.

When the situation became overwhelming, we went to Farm Credit for operating capital. This had a residual effect

through much of 2010 and even into 2011 because of the need to pay back borrowed money. Our margins were squeezed.

The difference between the farm milk price and feed cost are often referred to as dairy margins. These margins determine if a dairy can pay its bills and stay in business. Severely low or even negative margins in 2009 and 2010 made capital and land investments impossible. The average margin in 2009 was \$3.66. Even when margins improved in 2010, they were insufficient to cover costs. Margins did a fair recovery to a degree in 2011 to \$7.59, but are shrinking as we speak and are projected to be about \$5.80 this year.

Given this dire situation on our farm, I was extremely proud to be selected to the NMPF task force several years ago whose goal was to develop a new dairy policy for 2012 Farm Bill. I truly believe it was the affirmation of adversity that brought dairy farmers from New York and New England together with dairymen from all over the country to design policy that would provide a better safety net, reduce extreme volatility and cost less to government. I have gained friends and confidants from all across the country with the same goal.

Margin protection is the key to a successful national dairy policy. This is exactly why Agri-Mark designed a marginal milk pricing plan, which later became a vital part of Foundation for the Future and eventually today's Dairy Security Act. Combined with an adequate Margin Insurance Program, dairy farmers will have a key management tool to navigate the current and future extreme farm milk and feed price volatility climates.

Margin insurance should allow farmers to chose their level of participation as well as be affordable and encourage all sizes and types of operations to be protected. However, a break in premium for producers would be greatly appreciated.

The secret ingredient, from my perspective, is compromise, consensus and commitment. Remarkably, farmers representing about 80 percent of U.S. milk production have come to a consensus, and we urge you to support the principles of the Dairy Security Act. Thank you for your attention.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rea follows:]

Prepared Statement of Neal Rea, Dairy Producer; Chairman of the Board,
Agri-Mark Dairy Cooperative, Salem, NY

Chairman Lucas, Ranking Member Peterson and House Agriculture Committee Members: thank you for allowing me to testify today about dairy policy as impacts me, my family, my farm, and my co-op.

I am Neal Rea. My wife, Carol, and I own a dairy farm with our two sons, Thane and Travis, and daughter-in-law Karen. Our dairy is located in Washington County, and has been in our family for more than 200 years. It is because of the unselfish dedication of my family to the success of our dairy that I am able serve as the Chairman of the Board for my cooperative, Agri-Mark and on the board of directors for National Milk Producers Federation.

Agri-Mark is a dairy cooperative here in the Northeast with more than 1,200 members in New York and the New England states. We have many member farms north of us along the St. Lawrence River basin; from the Vermont border to Lake Ontario. Our members are the proud owners of McCadam cheese, an award winning cheddar produced in Chateaugay, NY-- only a short distance from here. Our members also own our fabulous flagship brand Cabot of Vermont.

Very seldom does an Agri-Mark monthly board meeting conclude without the 2012 Farm Bill debate being mentioned, so on my own behalf as well as on the farmers I represent through Agri-Mark, we sincerely appreciate the House Agriculture Committee Members and staff traveling to New York to hear from dairy producers like myself.

First, I would like to share our farm experiences from 2009, and the progression of events leading up to today's very timely House Agriculture Committee hearing. We have very little new equipment on our farm; we rely on good used equipment which we maintain ourselves. We have milk cow facilities to house about 190 cows. Construction of these facilities was accomplished over many years; some of our housing is 45 years old. Our most recent addition was completed during the winter of 2010/11. Our milking center is housed in the original stanchion barn; the equipment was used and expanded over the years to a current double 9 herringbone.

As the terrible conditions of 2009 played out (progressed) we became the victim of negative cash flow. Our milk checks were considerably less than the corresponding bills. There were tears, sleepless nights, frustration and tension. Carol's philosophy was and still is: we must pay for the cows feed, we must pay for electricity, and we must pay for herd health. All other creditors were on an allotment program. Some months we could only pay \$100 on a bill that was over \$1,000. Sometimes our own pay was delayed by months. It was

extremely difficult to face your agriculture supply personnel with partial payments, knowing they themselves had to borrow huge sums of money to cover their own operating expenses and deficit income. When the situation became overwhelming, we went to Farm Credit for operating capital. This had residual effects through much of 2010, because of extended credit and the need to pay back borrowed money.

Dairy farmers are a resilient breed, and I have a deeper appreciation for those who survived 2009.

Margins (the difference between the feed costs and the milk price) became ever so important. This is exactly why Agri-Mark designed a program which later became a vital part of the National Milk Producers Federation's Foundation for the Future, which is now the basis for the Dairy Security Act.

What has become clear to the dairy producer community from this extraordinary strain is that we need a combination of approaches to deal with the current situation. To address the underlying problems that caused this crisis and the many industry factors that contributed to its depth and protracted nature, we need to focus on solutions that avoid recurrences of this situation in the future.

Toward that end, NMPF created a Strategic Planning Task Force to seek consensus across the dairy producer community and create a solid "Foundation for the Future." I and my co-op, Agri-Mark, have been an integral part of this process. The goal of the Strategic Planning Task Force was to analyze and develop a long-term strategic plan for consideration by the NMPF Board of Directors that would have a positive impact on the various factors influencing both supply and demand for milk and dairy products. It is extremely important to develop workable and realistic solutions that will garner broad support from dairy producers nationwide in order to unify behind an approach as this Committee begins to consider the next farm bill.

I was extremely proud to be selected to the NMPF task force, designed to develop a new dairy policy for the 2012 Farm Bill. I truly believe it was the aforementioned adversity that brought dairy farmers from NY and Vermont together with dairymen from all over the country to design a dairy policy that would be less costly to the government and with the ability to correct the extreme volatility that caused the wreck of 2009. Throughout the process, I have gained friends and confidants from other major milk-producing regions of the country including New Mexico, California, Idaho, Michigan, Wisconsin, Nebraska and Indiana.

Margin protection is the key to the success of a dairy policy. The secret ingredient from my perspective now is compromise, consensus and commitment.

Rather than offering just one solution, dairy policy must be multi-faceted: it must refocus existing farm-level safety nets; create a new program to protect farmers against low margins; and establish a way to better balance dairy supply and demand. I would like to touch on each aspect of this approach.

1. Refocusing Current Safety Nets

Both the Dairy Product Price Support Program and the MILC program are inadequate protections against not just periodic low milk prices, but also in confronting the destructively low profit margins that occur when input costs, especially feed prices, shoot up. The Dairy Product Price Support Program, in particular, has outlived its usefulness and hinders the ability of U.S. and world markets to adjust timely and effectively to supply-demand signals.

Discontinuing the Price Support Program (DPPSP) would allow greater flexibility to meet increased global demand and shorten periods of low prices by reducing foreign competition in the marketplace. Additionally, shifting resources from the Price Support Program toward a new margin protection program would provide farmers a more effective safety net.

As the Chairman and Ranking Member may recall, NMPF vigorously defended the importance of the price support program, albeit modified to make improvements in certain respects, in the 2008 Farm Bill process. But at the end of the day, it is clear that the dairy product price support program is not the best use of Federal resources to establish a safety net to help farmers cope with periods of low prices and is not the most effective way of achieving this goal.

The DPPSP reduces total demand for U.S. dairy products and dampens our ability to export, while encouraging more foreign im-

ports into the U.S.

The price support program effectively reduces U.S. exports, by diverting some of our milk flow into government warehouses, rather than to commercial buyers in other nations. It creates a dynamic where it's harder for the U.S. to be a consistent supplier of many products, since sometimes we have products to export, and at other times, we just sell our extra production to the government.

The Program acts as a disincentive to product innovation.

It distorts what we produce, i.e., too much nonfat dry milk, and not enough protein-standardized skim milk powder and whole milk powder as well as specialty milk proteins such as milk protein concentrate, that are in demand both domestically and internationally. Because the price support program is a blunt instrument that will buy only nonfat dry milk--and because that's what some plants have been built to produce, as opposed to other forms of milk powder--it puts the U.S. at a competitive disadvantage to other global dairy vendors.

DPPSP supports dairy farmers all around the world and disadvantages U.S. dairy farmers.

Further aggravating measures, the current program helps balance world supplies, by encouraging the periodic global surplus of milk products to be purchased by U.S. taxpayers. Dairy farmers in other countries, particularly the Oceania region, enjoy as much price protection from the DPPSP as our own farmers. Without USDA's CCC buying up an occasional surplus of dairy proteins in the form of nonfat dry milk, a temporarily lower world price would affect our competitors--all of whom would be forced to adjust their production downward--and ultimately hasten a global recovery in prices.

The DPPSP isn't effectively managed to fulfill its objectives.

Although the DPPSP has a standing offer to purchase butter, cheese and nonfat dry milk, during the past 12 years, only the last of that trio has been sold to the USDA in any significant quantity. In essence, the product that the DPPSP really supports is nonfat dry milk. Even at times when the cheese price has sagged well beneath the price support target, cheese makers choose not to sell to the government for a variety of logistical and marketing-related reasons, such as overly restrictive packaging requirements. We have tried to address these problems, but USDA has to date been unwilling to account for the additional costs required to sell to government specifications. Once purchased, powder returning back to the market from government storage also presents challenges, and can dampen the recovery of prices as government stocks are reduced.

The price levels it seeks to achieve aren't relevant to farmers in 2012.

Even though the \$9.90 per hundredweight milk price target was eliminated in the last farm bill, the individual product price support targets: \$1.13/lb. for block cheese, \$0.85 for powder, and \$1.05 for butter--essentially will return Class III and IV prices around \$10/cwt. But in an era of higher cost of production, that minimal price isn't acceptable in any way, shape or form.

In summary, discontinuing the DPPSP would eventually result in higher milk prices for U.S. dairy farmers. By focusing on indemnifying against poor margins, rather than on a milk price target that is clearly inadequate, we can create a more

relevant safety net that allows for quicker price adjustments, reduced imports and greater exports. As a result of our DPPSP, the U.S. has become the world's balancing plant--and dairy suppliers in other countries know this all too well. As time marches on, so, too, must our approach to helping U.S. farmers. It is because of this that America's dairy producers and coops are focused upon a transitional process that shifts the resources previously invested in the dairy product price support program and the MILC program, to a new producer income protection program.

2. Dairy Producer Margin Protection Program

As mentioned above, existing safety net programs (the price support program, and the MILC program) were created in a different era. Neither was designed to function in a more globalized market, where not just milk prices, but also feed costs and energy expenses, are more volatile and trending higher. In the future, the solvency of dairy farms will depend more on margins than just the milk price alone. In order to address this dilemma, dairy farmers and cooperatives are supporting a revolutionary new program called the Dairy Producer Margin Projection Program. It will help insure against the type of margin squeeze farmers experienced not only in 2009, and also at other points in the past when milk prices dropped, feed costs rose--or both conditions occurred in tandem.

In developing the Dairy Producer Marge Protection Program, a few important principles have been followed:

Losses caused by either low milk prices or high feed costs need to be covered.

A farmer's cost for basic protection must be kept low or nonexistent.

The level of protection available should be flexible, and producers should be able to purchase a higher level of protection if they choose.

The program should be voluntary, national in scope, and open to all dairy farmers, regardless of size.

The program should not provide incentives to create artificial over-production.

The program must be easy to access by all producers through a simple application process or through the assistance of their cooperative.

3. Market Stabilization

Farmers have worked together since 2003, through the Cooperatives Working Together (CWT) program, to address both the supply and the demand sides of the equation that ultimately determines milk prices. But more is needed.

The Dairy Security Act contains a market stabilization program that prompts dairy farmers, only when absolutely needed, to adjust their milk output during periods of low margins.

To prevent steep and prolonged price declines--the likes of which we suffered from literally every day in 2009--the stabilization program encourages farmers to trim their milk output. This allows supply and demand to more quickly align, prevents dramatic price volatility, and avoids a prolonged l-margin environment. It also contains provisions that would make the program export-sensitive, meaning that if the U.S. risks losing its share of world dairy sales because of a misalignment of prices, the market stabilization program will trigger back out. And it's also important to remember that in the absence of the price support program, U.S. and world milk prices will naturally be in much greater alignment.

Now, this type of system is not for everyone, and the best part is, it's voluntary. Only those producers who opt for the margin protection program would have to reduce their output. Those who don't want any government safety net won't be subject to the

stabilization program.

All of these potential changes will ultimately require a new way of thinking about dairy economics. The dairy farmers I know recognize something has to be done before all the farms are gone and if there is one lesson to be learned from 2009; it's that change is needed.

Thank you again for your time and attention.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Verratti, when you're ready.

STATEMENT OF JEREMY L. VERRATTI, DAIRY AND CROP PRODUCER,
VERRATTI FARMS, LLC, GASPORT, NY

Mr. Verratti. Thank you. Good morning. My name is Jeremy Verratti. I'm a dairy and crop farmer from Gasport, New York, in Niagara County. I received my 4 year bachelors of science degree in business administration from the University of Buffalo. I'm a member of the Asset Liability Committee at Cornerstone Community Federal Credit Union and an active member of the Lockport Alliance Church. I have also been a leader of the Young Cooperators Program at our dairy cooperative, Upstate Niagara, along with my late wife, Stephanie, who passed away in a car accident a bit over a year ago.

Members of the Committee, thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify about the future of family farms in America. The farm policies that guide your formulation of the 2012 Farm Bill will have a major impact on sustaining family farms such as ours.

We are a fourth generation farm called Verratti Farms. At the moment, my father Dan, my two brothers Daniel and Ben, and I support our families by working on our farm. To help all of our families do all of the work on the farm, we have seven full-time employees and about two part-time employees. We milk over 450 cows. This means that there about 50 cows to generate enough income for each family that is depending on our farm for their livelihood.

Our farm's main source of income comes from milking cows. We feed our cows corn and hay that we grow on our own farm. In addition, we generate cash by selling some of our corn, soybeans and wheat. We grow these crops on about 1,400 acres of land that our farm owns and rents.

Verratti Farms has been recognized as a dairy of distinction for 20 years and has won various awards for the high quality of milk we produce. Our farm has been a member of a cooperative for decades. As our cooperative has grown, so has the markets for our milk, both in terms of geography and in terms of the numbers and types of customer.

For example, instead of just selling fluid milk to retail chains in western New York, as we did successfully for decades, nowadays our cooperative sells many different products throughout the United States and overseas. Among these products are traditional dairy products such as yogurt, cottage cheese, chip dip and ice cream mix as well as a number of shelf-stable innovative products such as sports drinks and dairy-based alcoholic beverages. It is essential that the 2012 Farm Bill help cooperatives and farms such as ours continue to benefit from these growing markets for dairy products in the United States and overseas.

The package of ideas called Foundation for the Future achieves this goal and is the basis for the Dairy Security Act. The package of ideas set forth in Foundation For the Future is being supported by National Milk Producers Federation and many others including myself, Verratti Farms, and my cooperative, Upstate Niagara.

In my brief time with you today, I want to emphasize one of the essential policies advocated by the Foundation for the Future that should guide your formulation of the 2012 Farm Bill sustaining family farms such as Verratti Farms.

Why do I care so much about sustaining family farms? Our farm in Gasport is now supporting its fourth generation of Verrattis. We want to stay dairy farmers and we want to stay in Gasport. Not only is western New York our home and a great place to live, but our family is heavily invested financially and emotionally in this farm that has been our home for 75 years.

Financially, here are some of the keys to sustaining family farms: In the long run, the price level of milk depends on demand growing for dairy products in the United States and overseas. But in the short run, from time to time, there are

bumps in the road in pricing that cause great financial and emotional stress on family farms. Sometimes these bumps are the price we are paid for our milk, sometimes these bumps are the price we must pay for feed, fuel and fertilizer.

A key part of the Foundation for the Future is to focus on the margin between milk prices and input cost such as feed. Margin insurance that is promoted and partially subsidized by the Federal Government would be very helpful in weathering these bumps in the road that disrupts normal market pricing. In fact, sometimes, as in 2009, these bumps are more like a boulder in the field you're plowing, a seismic shake, or even a widespread earthquake that threatens the foundation of an entire industry. As a young dairy producer, I will never forget the financial hardship of 2009.

However, sustaining family farms is more than a matter of good financial policy. Sustaining family farms is a matter of good public policy in the broadest sense of the term. We must work to keep our farms in the communities they are in and we must do it now.

Being widowed at the age of 26 changed my view of life and time. Time is short. God gives us days to work as farmers and He gives us days to work as elected officials. However, none of us knows how long that particular opportunity will present itself.

I want to marry again, have children, and be able to raise those children around the farm. Members of this Committee, please move forward with meaningful change so that I may realize these dreams. Thank you for your time and attention.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Verratti follows:]

Prepared Statement of Jeremy L. Verratti, Dairy and Crop Producer,
Verratti Farms, LLC, Gasport, NY

My name is Jeremy Verratti. I am a dairy and crop farmer from Gasport, New York near Lockport.

I received my 4 year Bachelor's of Science Degree in Business Administration from the University at Buffalo. I am a member of the Asset Liability Committee (ALCO) at Cornerstone Community Federal Credit Union and an active member of the Lockport Alliance Church.

I have also been a leader of the Young Cooperators program at our dairy cooperative, Upstate Niagara, along with my late wife, Stephanie, who passed away in a car accident a bit over a year ago.

Members of the Committee, thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify about the future of family farms in America. The farm policies that guide your formulation of the 2012 Farm Bill will have a major impact on sustaining family farms such as ours.

We are a fourth generation farm, called Verratti Farms. At the moment, my father (Dan), my two brothers (Daniel and Ben), and I support our families by working on our farm. To help our families do all of the work on the farm, we have seven full-time employees and about two part-time employees.

We milk over 450 cows. This means that there are about 50 cows to generate enough income for each family that is depending on our farm for their livelihood.

Our farm's main source of income comes from milking cows. We feed our cows corn and hay that we grow on our own farm. In addition, we generate cash by selling some of our corn, soybeans and wheat. We grow these crops on about 400 acres of land that our farm owns and about 1,000 acres of land that we rent.

Verratti Farms has been recognized as a Dairy of Distinction for 20 years and has won various awards for the high quality milk we produce.

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For example, instead of just selling fluid milk to retail chains in western New York as we did successfully for decades, nowadays our cooperative sells many different products throughout the United States and overseas. Among these products are traditional dairy products such as yogurt, cottage cheese, chip dip, and ice cream mix, as well as a number of shelf stable, innovative products such as sports drinks and dairy-based alcoholic beverages.

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Thank you for your time and attention.

The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Verratti.
Ms. Ledoux, whenever you're ready.

STATEMENT OF MICHELE E. LEDOUX, BEEF PRODUCER, ADIRONDACK BEEF COMPANY, CROGHAN, NY

Ms. Ledoux. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Congressman Gibson, Congressman Owens, my Congressmen, and Members of the Committee. My name is Michele Ledoux and I am a beef producer from Croghan, New York.

Before I begin, I'd like to thank you for traveling to the North Country to hold this field hearing on the farm bill. Most people don't think of New York when they think of agriculture, but it is one of the state's most important industries.

I'm particularly grateful that Congressman Owens and Congressman Gibson are Members of the Agriculture Committee, especially as Congress begins to rewrite the farm bill this year. They are an important voice for this region, where agriculture is the driving force of our local economy.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on issues related to the livestock industry in upstate New York. My farm, the Adirondack Beef Company, is located outside of Croghan. It's a small village that may be best known as home of the American Maple Museum. During this time of the year, you can see steam rising from many sugar houses in and around the village. Croghan is located in Lewis County which has twice as many cows as people, though most are dairy with only about 800 beef cows in the county. This is not surprising. Nationwide, New York is the third largest dairy state, but ranks 34th for cattle production.

With my husband Steve, son Jake, daughter Camille, our extended family and partner Ralph Chase, we operate a natural beef operation. We have not used any antibiotics or growth promotants for the past 12 years. We run approximately 50 shorthorn brood cows, with an Angus bull, as a cow/calf operation. We calve out in the spring, market the feeder calves in the winter, and finish some for the direct-to-consumer and restaurant markets.

Our family also raises natural lamb and pork. Our children have their own egg-laying operations and meat-bird business. This diversity allows us to offer a selection of meat products that consumers want when we sell at the farmers' market.

Our farm is a member of the Pride of New York Program, the New York State Beef Producers Association and Adirondack Harvest, all organizations that help us with branding, marketing and promotion of our products. Our children are involved in both the Lewis County 4-H Youth Program and the Beaver River FFA Program. We hope that they can stay on the farm, but know that agriculture is a tough business for young people who have many other opportunities. The policies that you enact in Washington this year will help determine whether my son can make his living as a family farmer.

As an aside, my daughter wants to be a large-animal veterinarian, helping to fill a shortage of these professionals in upstate farm communities. As a beef producer, I'm delighted there will be a new veterinarian in the pipeline. For Camille's sake, I hope you keep reauthorizing the Veterinarian Medicine Loan Repayment Program until she's ready for it.

In addition to running our farm, both my husband and I have full-time jobs in ag-related industries. Steve works for Shur-Gain, an animal feed company, and I work for the local Cornell Cooperative Extension office, for the past 26 years, where I am currently the Executive Director of Lewis County.

I want to make it clear that I am not testifying on behalf of Cornell University or Cornell Cooperative Extension system, but as an independent beef producer who happens to work for extension. My hands-on farm experience makes me a better extension agent because I know firsthand what educational programs, resources and support are most relevant and needed for beef producers in our region. This is important because the Continuing Education Programs offered through Cornell Cooperative Extension and the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets help us maintain a quality operation and a competitive edge.

For example, my family has completed the Masters of Beef Advocacy and the Beef Quality Assurance Certification Programs. We also work with our veterinarian, Dr. Deanna Fuller, to attain our status as a bovine viral diarrhea and Johnes-free herd through the New York State Cattle Health Assurance Program. This program, sponsored by Agriculture and Markets and managed by the New York State Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory at Cornell, ensures that ours is a clean, certified herd. It goes without saying that the livestock and dairy industries rely on a comprehensive and well-funded animal health network that conducts routine surveillance, monitoring and research to protect our herds from outbreaks and emerging diseases.

Research, Education and Extension Programs at land-grant universities like Cornell are among the several farm bill programs that are of critical importance to the New York livestock industry. Farmers' Market Programs, that direct to consumer market, is a very important source of income for us. Our farm sells at the Central New York Regional Farmers' Market in Syracuse, and we also are considering starting a Community-Supported Ag Program to support our local sales.

We found that our consumers are willing to pay a premium for our natural beef. The higher prices we receive in farmers' markets allows us to cover the added costs of producing beef by these methods. Grants from the Farmers' Market Promotion Program to the Farmers Market Federation of New York has helped us with training and joint marketing. It's also supported region groups working on CSA models. In addition, cooperative extension is involved in these efforts by providing direct marketing training, seminars and workshops to farmers who have no experience selling to consumers.

The Farmers Market Nutrition Program is an important source of income and a critical resource in helping expand farmers' markets into new areas. New York State has the most successful FMNP Program in the country and should serve as a model for other states.

I urge you to reauthorize and fully fund the FMNP Program for both seniors and for WIC families. As the demand for local food grows, farmers' markets and other forms of direct sales have helped increase the viability and profitability of many farms like mine. Reauthorization and expansion of these programs should be a top priority in the farm bill.

The 2008 Farm Bill finally included Permanent Disaster Assistance Programs that should be included, should be continued in 2012. Farmers need some assurance of protection when a catastrophic disaster strikes. Ad hoc assistance is too uncertain, especially in the current budget environment in Washington, D.C., and the state, and often takes too long to

access.

We took advantage of Disaster Programs when a drought hit our farm a few years ago. New York State most recently had to deal with flooding from Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee last summer. While my farm was not affected, I know many producers in other parts of the state who lost entire crops including forage for their herds. The New York State Soil and Water Conservation District and Cornell Cooperative Extension office stepped in to provide help, information and resources to farmers and citizens.

As a beef producer, I know that the Livestock Indemnity Program and the Emergency Livestock Assistant Program are the most useful programs for me if disaster strikes and should be reauthorized in the farm bill. Programs in the farm bill that help beginning farmers as they are getting established are important when you consider the nation's aging farmer base. These programs provide resources, training, education, and loans for new farmers.

I think of Casey Nelsen, an animal science major in his junior year of college, who has been up to our farm for the experience. He is not from a farm background but wants to farm when he graduates. Without support of the Beginner Farmer Programs, his barriers to entry would be difficult for him to overcome.

Through my work with cooperative extension, we have posted a Beef 101 series of workshops for beginner beef farmers in such basics as vaccinations, fencing, equipment, worming and feeding. It has been such a success that it's been replicated in other parts of the state. The 2008 Farm Bill made the Beginner Farmer Program a mandatory program to ensure that it received funding every year.

As you know, all the mandatory programs are zeroed out in the President's 2013 budget because their authorization expires at the end of the current fiscal year. Extension and reauthorization of this program would help provide new farmers with the resources they need to get started. In addition, training programs provided through the formula-based programs like Smith-Lever for extension and Hatch for research are vital sources of information for beginner farmers.

The Chairman. Can you summarize, Ms. Ledoux?

Ms. Ledoux. If you'll indulge me, the Department of Labor's youth labor regulations are not technically part of the farm bill, but several Smith-Lever Programs, including the 4-H Youth Development and Youth Farm Safety touch on these issues, and I ask that you think about the fact that we need to keep young teenagers participating in education and training to address these safety issues and those are very important. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Ledoux follows:]

Prepared Statement of Michele E. Ledoux, Beef Producer, Adirondack Beef Company, Croghan, NY

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Peterson, Congressman Gibson, Congressman Owens--my Congressman--and Members of the Committee. My name is Michele Ledoux. I am a beef producer from Croghan, New York. Before I begin, I'd like to thank you for traveling to the North Country to hold this field hearing on the farm bill--most people don't think of New York when they think of agriculture, but it is one of the state's most important industries. I am particularly grateful that Congressman Owens and Congressman Gibson are Members of the Agriculture Committee, especially as Congress begins to rewrite the farm bill this year. They are an important voice for this region, where agriculture is the driving force of our local economy. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on issues related to the livestock industry in Upstate New York.

My farm--the Adirondack Beef Company--is located outside of Croghan, a small village that may be best known as the home of the American Maple Museum. During this time of the year, you can see steam rising from the many sugarhouses in and around the village. Croghan is located in Lewis County, which has twice as many cows as people--though most are dairy, with only about 800 hundred beef cows. This is not surprising: nationwide, New York is the third largest dairy state, but ranks 34th for cattle production.

With my husband Steve, son Jake, daughter Camille, our extended family, and partner Ralph Chase, we operate a natural beef operation. We have not used any antibiotics or growth promotants for the past 12 years. We run approximately 50 Shorthorn brood cows with an Angus bull as a cow/calf operation. We calve out in the spring, market the feeder calves in the winter, and finish some for the direct-to-consumer and restaurant markets. Our family also raises natural lamb and pork. Our children have their own egg laying operation and meat bird business.

This diversity allows us to offer a selection of meat products that consumers want when we sell at farmers' markets.

Our farm is a member of the Pride of New York program, the New York State Beef Producers Association, and Adirondack Harvest--all organizations that help us with branding, marketing, and promotion of our products. Our children are involved in both the Lewis County 4-H Youth Program and the Beaver River FFA Program. We hope that they can stay on the farm, but know that agriculture is a tough business for young people who have many other opportunities. The policies that you enact in Washington this year will help determine whether my son can make his living as a family farmer. As an aside, my daughter wants to be a large animal veterinarian, helping to fill a shortage of these professionals in Upstate farm communities. As a beef producer, I'm delighted that there will be a new veterinarian in the pipeline. For Camille's sake, I hope you keep reauthorizing the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program until she's ready for it!

In addition to running our farm, both my husband and I have full time jobs in agriculture-related industries. Steve works for Shur-Gain, an animal feed company, and I have worked for the local Cornell Cooperative Extension office for the past 26 years, where I am currently Executive Director of the Lewis County office. I want to make it clear that I am not testifying on behalf of Cornell University or the Cornell Cooperative Extension System, but as an independent beef producer who happens to work for Extension. My "hands on" farm experience makes me a better Extension agent, because I know firsthand what educational programs, resources, and support are most relevant and needed for beef producers in our region. This is important because the continuing education programs offered through Cornell Cooperative Extension and the NY State Department of Agriculture & Markets help us maintain a quality operation and a competitive edge.

For example, my family and I have completed the Master of Beef Advocacy and the Beef Quality Assurance Certification programs. We also work with our veterinarian, Dr. Deanna Fuller, to attain our status as a Bovine Viral Diarrhea- and Johnes-Free Herd through the New York State Cattle Health Assurance Program. This program, sponsored by Agriculture & Markets and managed by the New York State Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory at Cornell, ensures that ours is a clean, certified herd. It goes without saying that the livestock and dairy industries rely on a comprehensive and well-funded animal health network that conducts routine surveillance, monitoring, and research to protect our herds from outbreaks and emerging diseases.

Research, education, and extension programs at land-grant universities like Cornell are among several farm bill programs that are of critical importance to the New York livestock industry. Let me tell you about some others:

Farmers Market Promotion Programs. The direct-to-consumer market is a very important source of income for us. Our farm sells at the Central New York Regional Farmers Market in Syracuse, and we are also considering starting a Community Support Agriculture (CSA) program to improve our local sales. We've found that our customers are willing to pay a premium for our natural beef.

The higher prices we receive in farmers markets allow us to cover the added costs of producing beef by these methods.

Grants from the Farmers Market Promotion Program to the Farmers Market Federation of New York have helped us with training and joint marketing; they have also supported regional groups working on CSA models. In addition, Cooperative Extension is involved in these efforts by providing direct marketing training, seminars, and workshops to farmers who have no experience selling to consumers. The Farmers Market Nutrition Programs is an important source of income and a critical resource in helping expand farmers' markets into new areas. New York State has the most successful FMNP program in the country, and should serve as a model for other states. I urge you to reauthorize and fully fund the FMNP program for both Seniors and for WIC families. As the demand for local food grows, farmers markets and other forms of direct sales have helped increase the viability and profitability of many farms like mine. Reauthorization and expansion of these programs should be a top priority in the farm bill.

Disaster Assistance Programs. The 2008 Farm Bill finally included permanent disaster assistance programs that should be continued in 2012. Farmers need some assurance of protection when a catastrophic disaster strikes. Ad hoc assistance is too uncertain--especially in the current budget environments in Washington DC and the states--and often takes too long to access. We took advantage of disaster programs when a drought hit our farm a few years ago. New York State most recently had to deal with flooding from Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee last summer. While my farm was not affected, I know many producers in other parts of the state who lost entire crops, including forage for their herds. The New York State Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Cornell Cooperative Extension offices stepped in to provide help,

information, and resources to farmers and citizens. As a beef producer, I know that the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) and Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP) are the most useful programs for me--if disaster strikes--and should be reauthorized in the farm bill.

Beginning Farmer Programs. Programs in the farm bill that help beginning farmers as they are getting established are important, when you consider the nations' aging farmer base. These programs provide resources, training, education, and loans for new farmers. I think of Casey Nelsen, an animal science major in his junior year of college, who has been up to help on our farm for the "experience." He is not from a farm background, but wants to farm when he graduates. Without the support of the beginning farmer programs, the barriers to entry would be difficult for him to overcome. Through my work with Cooperative Extension, we have hosted a "Beef 101" series of workshops for beginner beef farmers on such basics as vaccinations, fencing, equipment, worming, and feeding. It has been such a success that it is being replicated in other parts of the state.

The 2008 Farm Bill made the Beginning Farmer program a mandatory program, to ensure that it received funding every year. As you know, all the mandatory programs are "zeroed-out" in the President's 2013 budget because their authorization expires at the end of the current fiscal year. Extension and reauthorization of this program will help provide new farmers with the resources they need to get started. In addition, training programs provided through the formula-based programs like Smith-Lever for extension and Hatch for research, are vital sources of information for beginning farmers.

Country-of-Origin Labeling. Country-of-Origin Labeling ("COOL") is an important program for both livestock producers and consumers. In my experience with direct sales, people want to know where their food comes from, to be sure that it is safe and healthy. Since the World Trade Organization has ruled that COOL requirements for beef and pork are not WTO-compliant, USDA needs to write rules that preserve the intent of COOL while conforming to our international trade agreements. We know that it is possible for COOL to be WTO-compliant, because other countries have successfully instituted COOL programs. Even apart from the farm bill, it is important that Congress instruct USDA to fix the problems with the U.S. system as soon as possible, so that producers across the country aren't harmed by retaliatory tariffs from Canada and Mexico.

Youth Labor Regulations. Although the Department of Labor's youth labor regulations are not technically part of the farm bill, several Smith-Lever programs--including 4-H Youth Development and Youth Farm Safety--touch on these issues. If you will indulge me, I would like to tell you that the Labor Department's recent proposal to change the youth agricultural labor regulations threatens the operations of family farms. Youth safety on farms--because of the Smith-Lever programs I mentioned--has been improving.

The DOL's proposal, however, cuts at the heart of family tradition by preventing young people from working on their family's farm. My children have been in the barn with us doing chores and learning responsibility since they were young. We have taught them how to work safely around machines and animals, so that they have grown up to be as safety-conscious as my husband and I. As a farm mother, I can tell you that the best way to ensure a future generation of farmers is to teach them safety while they are young, so that it becomes a lifelong habit.

DOL's proposal, however, will prevent young teenagers from participating in the education and training programs that have been developed specifically to address safety issues. For example, the Cornell Cooperative Extension 4-H program sponsors a Tractor Safety Program each spring in many New York counties to teach young teenagers how to operate farm equipment safely. My 15 year old son will be taking the program this year. These are the kinds of educational programs that need to be supported and continued.

Conclusion. In conclusion, I know that you will be faced with many difficult decisions as you write the farm bill this year. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank you and the Committee--especially Mr. Owens and Mr. Gibson--for giving me the chance to tell you about some of the programs that have helped my family and me run a successful beef operation in Upstate New York. I hope that you will take these views into consideration as you move forward.

I would be please to answer any questions you have.

The Chairman. Thank you.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

Probably a good way to start this give-and-take questioning is to observe something that really comes clear in Ms. Ledoux's comments, and that is the challenges of the budget process.

If we just were to extend the existing farm bill for another 5 years, we would be about \$9 billion short. In the way the previous farm bill was put together, there was not a

permanent stream of funding for all programs, as she correctly noted, and a number of those programs are not funded, even if the authorization is in force, we have that challenge.

We also will be spending less money on the next farm bill, whether it's the \$23 billion reduction in spending compared to the previous farm bill that was agreed to by the principals of the Agriculture and Senate Committee or the President's \$32 billion proposed reduction, or the \$40+ billion reduction suggested last year by the House Budget Committee, we'll have less money to spend. So that makes our challenges tougher trying to be responsible and keep the good things.

That said, I must note, Ms. Ledoux, I'm always happy to see a fellow shorthorn producer, someone who is working also very hard to address some of the diseases and genetic issues, not just within our breed but within all breeds. That's responsible stewardship and that's part of our responsibilities.

I would first start by asking this question, and my colleagues who served on these panels with me for a number of years know that by my nature as an ag economist, a western Okie, there are a few fundamental things I'm always very curious about. Can you tell me, for just a moment, about land prices in your particular areas, the farmland? Up, down, sideways, it's all being bought by developers? Just a quick observation.

Mr. Ooms. Well, I'm in Kinderhook, which is just south of Albany. I can be parked at the Statue of Liberty in 2 hours on a Sunday morning.

The Chairman. Oh, my goodness.

Mr. Ooms. Land prices are down in our area, but land and farm land are not necessarily the same thing. But farm land that's developable is way down and some farm land, a good tract of farm land in our neighborhood, beautiful, it's great soil, about 80 percent tillable, went for \$4,500 an acre. And there is some other land, if it's preserved and the development rights extinguished, you're talking between a \$1,000 and \$2,000 an acre. That's what I would pay. I don't know exactly what others would pay. So, but land values are down because that \$4,500 in 2008 would have been--\$10,000 would have been pretty much in the ball park.

The Chairman. Anyone else wish to comment?

Mr. Rea. I'd like to make a comment. It depends pretty specifically on the region. We have an area just 30 miles away where it seems to be quite popular to have a lot of horse farms, and it's certainly escalated the value of land there. Our land right in our particular Washington County is pretty stable. We've--we've purchased farm land for about the same price recently as we did 10 years ago.

Mr. Verratti. Not a lot of development pressure, but I know in our neck of the woods, in Niagara County, open ag land is limited. So open agriculture land, the rents are on their way up. As far as the prices in our particular county for purchase, they range between \$2,000 and \$3,000, depending on the quality of the acreage, but seem to be heading up in correlation with soybean and corn prices.

Ms. Ledoux. Obviously, I'm in a more rural county, and it's about \$800 to \$1,000 for tillable land.

The Chairman. Fair enough.

For those of you who deal with the crop side of the equation, and we'll talk about dairy in just a moment, tell me your opinions, your observations about what you hear in regards to how present crop insurance works and where you'd like to go on the crop side.

Mr. Ooms. Personal--personal opinion, we signed up for the catastrophic coverage that FSA requires and maybe someday we'll figure out the rest of it. So we don't really worry about it.

The Chairman. Understandable answer. Yes.

Mr. Rea. We have not used crop insurance in the past just because there would have to be a catastrophic loss to get a third of what you would lose, and we just haven't thought that that was a fair exchange for the premiums.

Mr. Verratti. We do--the premiums seem to be cheap enough for us for catastrophic--the cat insurance that we have been signing up for it. Actually, particularly this year, roughly 2 weeks ago, we had a crop insurance rep come in from ADM, and we are looking at it. It seems to be, because of the subsidy on that crop insurance, it seems to be very reasonable and at some lower reasonable levels for production on the crops side, we are looking at going in that direction.

As far as the other sort of programs and payments, direct and countercyclical payments, not a big deal. They seem to be a

drop in the bucket in the grand scheme of things with the increase in crop income. They don't seem to be very effective. It's money, we'll take it, but it's not a game changer.

The Chairman. With that, my time has expired. I would now recognize the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. Scott, for 5 minutes.

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and let me just say that each of your testimony has been very, very interesting and very, very informative.

I'd like to touch upon a couple of areas that I'm equally vitally concerned about, and that is the threats to our family farms. And I think each of you are certainly, you Mr. Verratti and Ms. Ledoux, I hope I pronounced that right, mentioned that. What are the one or two major threats that you see right now to the existence of our family farms? I think you went into a couple of those, but just for the record.

Mr. Verratti. I'll go ahead and go first. That's a great question, Congressman Scott. I would say the two top for me would be milk pricing, which I addressed in my testimony. More specifically, the margin between your--the income from the milk and the expenses. I do the books. I'm kind of the account manager at the farm, which sometimes has caused me to grind my teeth, but it's been a generally good experience. But you're always going to have your labor and--and your feed at the very top of your expenses, so that's why there's so much discussion between the income from milk and the cost of feed. That margin is very, very important.

Second thing would be regulation. I'd like to see less regulation on small businesses in general in this country, especially farms. For us specifically, we put a lot of money last year into CAFO, getting ourselves in line as far as regulations between manure quality, manure water quality, and these types of things.

And I just want to continue to make the point that dairy farmers and farmers in general were the original recyclers. We invented sustainability, if I dare say so myself. We take a not-so-nice product from the back end of a cow and reuse it and make crops and--and move forward that way. And it's an important thing and I don't want to see that stifled by high, high amounts of regulation.

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. Let me ask you real quickly about the Labor Department's proposed regulation dealing with child labor, I know that they put a parental exemption into it. Tell me what effect would this regulation, this new rule by the Labor Department regulating child labor affect a family farm?

Mr. Verratti. It would definitely affect it. You saw in my testimony I look forward to raising my kids, God willing, on the farm. I was raised, I worked on the farm, I lived right on the farm since--my entire life. I would love to see that regulation go away just because I think it's a great way to train kids how to work, and to show them the business and to teach them a great work ethic.

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. Now one of the things that we're looking at in this new farm bill is to be able to, in addition to our research grants that we give to our universities and colleges, that we can put some language in there that would allow some of this money to go into scholarships to give the young people who would go into agriculture related areas, which I think would be very helpful. Would that be helpful?

Mr. Verratti. That would be fantastic, sir. I would love that.

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. And before my time goes up, Ms. Ledoux, you--you--you made an interesting comment of you don't use antibiotics.

Ms. Ledoux. Correct.

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. And what's the result of that? That's--I mean, how do you treat your sick animals?

Ms. Ledoux. First of all, we run a--a Vaccination Program for our animals, so we are--just like you would vaccinate your children, we vaccinate our cows. And so we have been very fortunate, that we look at our animals. We see them every day. And if we do have an animal that is sick, we will treat it with antibiotics, but we pull it out of the general population. And so it's not something that we would sell to our consumers.

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. So----

Ms. Ledoux. So I would not let that animal die----

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. Right.

Ms. Ledoux.--if it needed antibiotics.

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. Well, I get a feeling that you may sense that there's something wrong with using antibiotics?

Ms. Ledoux. No, absolutely not. I think, you know what? Everybody needs to do what is good for them. Our consumers would prefer animals that are antibiotic-free and no growth hormones.

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. Right.

Ms. Ledoux. And so that meets our consumers that we deal with. There's nothing wrong with using antibiotics.

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. Very good. And Mr. Ooms, you mentioned in your testimony about EQIP, which I think is an extraordinarily important program that we've got to give incentives to ranchers and farmers so that we can keep the animal waste out of our rivers and streams.

What impact do you believe would have if we cut--because there is a feeling in the new farm bill, as the Chairman mentioned, budgetary--and I mentioned in my opening comments, budgetary restraints, and there's a uniform figure maybe we have to cut things by ten percent. What would cutting the incentives by ten percent, what effect would that have on this excellent program?

Mr. Ooms. Sure. If I could just, I have a 4 year old and a 2 year old, and when my--when I was a kid--as far as the Department of Labor regulations, when I was a kid, my dad would take me on a Massey-Harris 33 with just the steel fenders, and you held on for dear life.

My 4 year old goes with me on our 4850 John Deere, which is a 30 year old tractor with a cab, and I wouldn't even dare to take him on the other tractor. According to the Department at Labor regulations, my kids could--I realize mine are really small. I'm probably not legal anyway. But--the point--the point is, that they couldn't be on any power--they couldn't use any power equipment. That's a big concern.

As far as EQIP, on our farm, the reason why EQIP is great is because we have--we are--we milk 400 cows and therefore we are a medium-sized CAFO in New York. New York has some of the leading CAFO rules in the country, and we've done a lot of storage and management, nutrient management on our farm. And EQIP has helped pay for the cash investment, but we've had a 50 percent sweat investment in what--and some cash of our own. We just wouldn't be able to do some of these things because we're protecting everyone's environment, it's everyone's investment. And while we want a good environment, some of these things are reasonable, but we talk about profitability all the time, that if we had profitability, then we wouldn't need EQIP.

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. So the bottom line is a ten percent cut, if we did that, would have a very devastating impact?

Mr. Ooms. Yes, and I consciously mentioned EQIP in my testimony, but not any other funding for that reason, because EQIP is important.

The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Goodlatte, for 5 minutes.

Mr. Goodlatte. Thank you--thank you Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank you for bringing the Committee to this beautiful part of New York State and it's a pleasure to be here. When I was Chairman of the Committee, prior to the writing of the last farm bill, we held a hearing in New York, but it was much further west, in the Finger Lakes region, and so it's great to see this part of New York. And such a great turn out here, too. This is a really good response from folks interested in agriculture here in New York.

I want to say that, as has already been said, the financial pressures on the Agriculture Committee, in fact on the entire Congress, with regard to our entire budget with the fourth year in a row now that we're going to have deficits in excess of a trillion dollars, will--of necessity mean that we will have fewer resources when we work on this farm bill. So I want to focus on some of the things that we can do that, either don't cost as much money or cost some money but replace programs that might cost a lot more.

One of those areas was mentioned by Mr. Scott and was mentioned by Ms. Ledoux, and just a--a moment ago by Mr. Ooms, and that's regulatory issues. I just introduced this--this week legislation to halt the effort of the EPA that affects some parts of New York, again, further west from here, but also the other five states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, which includes my district in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, from usurping power from the states and imposing mandatory regulations in an area where the states have made considerable progress in reducing sedimentation and phosphorus and nitrogen

going into the Bay and attempting to replace that with mandates for which they've done no cost-benefit analysis and no effort to make sure that this will actually help the Bay in any significant way. Which we certainly want to do, but not at the expense of, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, an estimated \$16 billion in cost to the state, to localities, to farmers, to other businesses, home builders, and so on.

All of that is very important as are some of the other regulations we talked about here. But we can't do some of those things in the farm bill, because of the fact jurisdiction, for example, with the Chesapeake Bay, rests primarily with other committees. So we'll be working with Members in those committees to push forward on that.

But in the farm bill, I want to ask what each of you do with regard to risk management. What kind of risk management practices, if any, do you currently implement in your dairy operations, in your beef cattle operation?

We'll start and go right down the room.

Mr. Ooms. Well, like I said earlier, we--we have the catastrophic coverage just because it's so cheap and you have to do it to get any program of any--any kind. But essentially, what we do for risk management is we have our corn spread out over 12 miles, so therefore the rainfall--we basically self-insure on that. And we always try to have a buffer of feed from year to year. And, for instance, this year we're selling less feed because we didn't have as much feed from last year.

And I mentioned in my testimony building a dryer and grain storage. That's a cushion for our dairy farm. One of the things that, in the dairy industry, with higher feed prices, there's an opportunity for us in the Northeast to grow our own crops, because we have natural rainfall, so we self-insure.

Mr. Goodlatte. Do you use the RMA's Livestock Gross Margin Program?

Mr. Ooms. No. And the only--the--the honest answer is no. And the reason why not is because it's so--I've heard the horror stories about trying to get into it. There is some real opportunity there, but--we have friends that have been in line. I have a friend that's a broker. He has 40 clients he was trying to get it for. This is somebody who does it professionally. He had 40 people in line, he got number one and number two on his priority list and that was it. So we are interested in that, but we haven't bothered because---

Mr. Goodlatte. Okay. If you would address that too, Mr. Rea, and we'll go right down the row here, but I'm only going to be able to ask because of---

Mr. Rea. Sure. Thank you. For risk management, we do forward contracting with either fuel or grain, depending on what the market situation is. We also have had a program in the past with--through our cooperative where we could forward contract some of our milk, but as far as LGM, we've not used that. And we do not use the futures market on selling our milk.

Mr. Verratti. We do forward contract some of our expenses as far as some of input cost on feed, also at some point fuel. And we have forward contracted with a small program just simply through our dairy cooperative on roughly ten percent of what we produce. We did that in 2009 and 2010.

However, as far as the RMA's Livestock Gross Margin Insurance Program, the complexity is there and I--I'm a guy that likes computers. I'm 27. I'd love to watch markets all day, but I have a dairy farm to run. And some of this stuff--I don't feel like paying people high amounts of money to consult on these different things to figure these programs out. So if it's simple and the premiums are reasonable, I'll use it.

Mr. Goodlatte. Ms. Ledoux?

Ms. Ledoux. Obviously I talked about the Livestock Indemnity Program, the Emergency Livestock Assistance Program. And they're available for beef producers if they need them. And you know, we had a lot of issues here in New York State that happened this past summer, and Soil and Water, and Cooperative Extension was there to assist people.

Mr. Goodlatte. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This area of insurance is very complex unfortunately, but it also is an area where, because you can have participation by both the government with some of the cost of it and the producer with some of the cost, it may well be the fairest way to spread risk over a wide area with a lot fewer resources moving ahead. So we're going to have to devote a lot of effort to making it work in a fairer and more open and, I would say simple, but I know how complex it is because each crop is different in each part of the county, and people raise

livestock differently in different places and the weather conditions are different in different places. So it will be a real challenge, but I think that's where we need to focus.

The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from New York, Mr. Owens, for 5 minutes.

Mr. Owens. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to echo Mr. Goodlatte's comments, that I'm glad my colleagues have gotten to see such a beautiful part of the world as part of their farm bill hearing adventure for this year.

Mr. Ooms, I have to say that your comment, "import labor or import food," I think that that's an extraordinarily succinct description of the crisis that we face in the farm labor area, and we would certainly like to have your permission to use that on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Ooms. It's not copyrighted.

Mr. Owens. Thank you. Thank you.

A question to Mr. Ooms and to Mr. Verratti. We've talked a little bit about issues related to regulation. My question is: How do we strike a balance between the regulatory issues and, if you will, preserving clean water and other environmental issues? It seems to me that that's where we should be trying to go, is to reach a balance, and I'm wondering if you have any specific suggestion that you could offer to us that would help us reach that balance?

Mr. Ooms. Go first.

Mr. Verratti. Make it simple. If we can keep the water clean, the manure where it should be, I think everybody will be happy.

Mr. Owens. My question is: How do you do that? I really want to know what you would recommend to actually accomplish that goal?

Mr. Verratti. You're very quickly going to get above my pay grade, but the--the programs that are here now, we are very close to CAFO compliant on our farm. That program seems to work. We seem to see the benefits of the implementation as far as keeping some of the runoff from our silage piles where it should be, keeping the manure where it should be and not mixing with rainwater, these types of things.

But we need to be able to spread manure on our fields and use that as fertilizer, and we need to have a place to go with it. And we desire to see the water clean and a lot of the other resources clean, but the--the regulation that we hear rumors of seems to be way more than that. So I guess what I'm saying is, the way--the things we're seeing in New York, as far as this specific system, seem to be okay. Much more regulation, way beyond the money that we should be spending, is more than I want to pay for.

Mr. Ooms. I personally think, and we've had the opportunity in New York to, out of necessity, we've worked with a lot of environmental organizations to try to find ways we can get to the same place, because everybody wants clean water. But everybody also needs to eat, okay? And there's a mentality--I won't get specific. There's a mentality in some places in Washington, at EPA, what the heck, that the environment is for the environment and then ag is for the ag guys. And the fact is, we live in the environment and we need the environment. We have to protect the environment.

As far as specific issues, I'm not trying to shill for a specific program, but EQIP has worked because our nutrient management plan, our CAFO situation, we didn't have to do CAFO, but we're to the point, like Verratti's, we're getting to the point where we need to. We have a nutrient management plan. There's a lot of things that we were doing already, we just put them on paper.

But the fact of the matter is now, we always learn things when you do these types of things, but it cost time and money and effort, and just working through that process has been great. So I would hold up EQIP just because it's something we've talked about already and it really has had--everyone has skin in the game.

Mr. Owens. Thank you.

Mr. Rea, you testified that dairy farmers support the Dairy Security Act in the range of 80 percent. I'm curious as to where that statistic comes from?

Mr. Rea. National Milk Producers Federation represents 31 dairy cooperatives, and we think that that's about 80 percent of the total U.S. supply of milk.

Mr. Owens. And you think that if that were implemented

that that would in effect give adequate stability to milk prices?

Mr. Rea. I think the market stabilization plan, we have to realize that we all, now, from the discussions this morning, that we in our own industries have to take active roles in how we see the future playing out. And I think if dairy farmers take an active role in stabilizing the market, then I think we can make this work.

Certainly, it's a lot different than what we've been accustomed to, with paying premiums for the insurance program, but if we can make the stabilization part of it work, I think we can be successful. There are no rules in there that say you have to reduce your production, but one way or another, if we can't bring the market into a balance with the supply, then we're going to be facing issues that we faced in 2009.

Mr. Owens. Does anyone on the panel have any contrary view? I want to see if there's anybody who fits in the 20 percent.

Mr. Ooms. I would just say as long as the supply management portion is voluntary, it's up to that farm to figure out what they want to do. I have concerns if it's mandatory, though my family has no intention to milk more cows. But if it's voluntary, you're going to get a Margin Insurance Program that's going to be subsidized on some level. That's a carrot-and-stick approach and seems like a reasonable middle ground.

Mr. Verratti. So much focus has been on milk price and we've seen in various years price be pretty nice and yet expenses be well over that. So changing it from price focus to margin focus is a big, big part of the Dairy Security Act.

Mr. Owens. Thank you.

Ms. Ledoux, I'm sorry, but my time has expired. I yield back.

The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Conaway, for 5 minutes.

Mr. Conaway. Well, thanks, Mr. Chairman, and it's great to be here. I want to thank the Chamber of Commerce for last night's snow. You may not be all that keen on it. We've had 19 inches in west Texas, which was stunningly unusual and I missed all of it. So it's great to see the 1 inch of snow out there. I appreciate being here.

Mr. Verratti, I'm a CPA by background, and so your angst with the business side of it is understandable. If we go to a Margin Insurance Program, is there a standard definition of margin, and can you walk me through what you believe, each of you, what components go into margin, in determining that?

Mr. Verratti. To me, it's between the milk price we're being paid and the expense below that. Now the common one is feed, because that's generally the top. The big 3--my two biggest expenses are, everyday in the dairy, are labor and feed. So that's why they generally use that--and my definition would be between feed and some of the other high expenses and between the actual milk price we're getting paid.

Mr. Conaway. But what are some of those other high expenses? I mean, do you amortize or depreciate the cost of your equipment?

Mr. Verratti. Yes, equipment is a big one. The big ones for us are--fuel is huge, and we know that's going to be even bigger this year. Fertilizer for our crops. We are cash cropping some, but remember a lot of that fertilizer is being used to grow crops to feed our dairy cows.

Mr. Conaway. Now would you want the regulations to require that that be netted against your--your margins so that your--Mr. Owens talked about complicating regulations and this gets complicated--trying to figure out how you insure a margin, if there's no common definition of margin among the industry.

Mr. Verratti. The difficulty is going to be, sirs, when you get into places, like I--I have a good friend in Arizona. He's buying in a lot more feed than I am. I can grow a lot of my feed here.

Mr. Conaway. Right.

Mr. Verratti. So the difficulty is going to be when you go across the nation, the difficulties from state to state or from region to region.

Feed is a pretty good one in that, excuse me, purchased feed, because everybody needs to feed their dairy cows. As far as fertilizer, fuel, some of these other expenses, some of these places aren't using feed and fertilizer, they're buying all their feed in a truckload.

Mr. Conaway. Sure. I represent a bunch of processors as well, and so obviously there's push back from those guys who--

and they say they represent the consumer, those kind of things. So as we walk through this change in--in this policy, most of us on the dais have friends on both sides of this issue and we generally try to stick with our friends. And so that's as about as funny as a CPA is going to get.

So as we walk this path, your relationship with your processors is going to be an important tool as well.

A couple of you mentioned using forward contracting. The CFTC, of which our Committee has jurisdiction of oversight for, has recently been writing extensive rules to implement the Dodd-Frank Act that affects commodities. And have you yet been seeing an increase in your cost or lack of availability, or have your folks that you're working with been communicating to you at all about what the impact the CFTC's new regulations are having on your ability to manage risks with the forward contracts?

Mr. Verratti. In regards to your first comment, I'm involved with both a co-op and a processor all in one, and I am willing to be your friend. Even though you're a CPA, I'm willing to be your friend.

No, all kidding aside, as far as the--the fix forward pricing within our co-op, that was a free program. It was simply, I believe, somebody who wanted to purchase milk from our cooperative or processor, depending on how you look at the definition, at an even keel throughout the year, so that was not something as far as this--this Gross Margin Program that you're discussing, so I would have no premiums from that. This program seemed to be complex for me at the time.

Mr. Conaway. Mr. Rea, you mentioned--I'm sorry, Mr. Rea, you mentioned you forward contracted as well. Any impact from the CFTC's new rules?

Mr. Rea. No, I don't think that affects our forward contracting of corn or fuel, but I have seen no impact.

Mr. Conaway. Well, it hasn't been implemented yet, so it's still just a proposal for the most part, and I didn't know if you had been warned yet about any increases in your cost of doing business?

Mr. Rea. I have not.

Mr. Conaway. Okay. Mr. Ooms?

Mr. Ooms. I just said we self-insure, but we do forward contract fuel and feed. I thought you were talking about USDA programs earlier. And we haven't--the only thing I have heard, the only concern I've heard, is to make sure that we are looking at it from a basis of, we're using this product on our farm and there's some talk about having a reserve for whatever you forward contract. And our deal has always been, we contract our urea always in December for delivery sometime in the spring, usually March, April, May. And we pay it as we get it, cash on delivery.

I've heard that there's some talk, and if I'm stepping into a highly, hot issue, so be it, some talk about us having to back whatever we book. That would be a concern because we book feed sometimes 13, 16 months out and we don't have the cash on hand to pay for it. The urea is a little different because it's for the coming year. But I think part of the key is if you're an end-user of product, let us use it.

Mr. Conaway. Our Subcommittee, which has regulatory jurisdiction and the Chairman of the full Committee will try to make sure the end-users are not impacted by these new regulations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired. The chair now turns to the gentlelady from Maine, Ms. Pingree, for her 5 minutes.

Ms. Pingree. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, too, Mr. Gibson and Mr. Owens, for welcoming us to their region of the country. And thank you all, really, for being here in this room and--and for all of the people who have come to testify. Really articulate, useful commentary for all of us, so thank you very much.

I'm from Maine which has a small number of dairy producers, but pricing and margin issues are just as important to all of us and a huge concern, so I really appreciate the thoughts that you've brought to us today. But I want to address a slightly different issue. I'm interested in the local food and farming aspect of this.

I've introduced a title to the farm bill. It's got about 70 cosponsors, both--some on the Agriculture Committee, but a lot of people from around the country, all different regions, where people are seeing this huge growth in the interest in the

market; both what consumers are interested in and then the opportunities available to farmers who sell more of their produce and dairy products and value-added products locally. So I want to address a few questions around that.

I--as I said, I come from Maine, and because of this interest, we've seen the average age of our farmer going down and the number of farms and production growing up--going up. So to us it looks like a huge opportunity.

I'll ask Ms. Ledoux a couple of questions, but if any of the rest of you are also interested in this, please feel free to comment.

You mentioned in your testimony that you sell at the Central New York Regional Farmers' Market, but you're also considering starting a CSA, and that, for me, is particularly interesting. Can you tell us a little about some of the barriers that you face in your production in terms of scaling up? Are there other problems you deal with, with marketing chains or distribution networks in terms of expansion?

Ms. Ledoux. We brand our meat in the sense that it's natural, and so we just decided that moving from doing the farmers' market, which has been great, but it ties up a Saturday. And so I have a 12 year old and a 15 year old at home who are very active on the farm, but we thought that the next step for us was to do a community supported ag, which would allow us to have them be involved in the farm, but not tie up every Saturday going to a farmers' market. And that's really why we felt the next move for us was to do the community supported ag.

We have a good following down at the farmers' market down in Syracuse that are very interested in that, and they would like to have a steady supply of our meat and the other things that we could offer them, the eggs and things like that. So we just thought that was the next step up that worked out very well for our farm.

Ms. Pingree. Anyone else on that?

Mr. Ooms. Just about that you mentioned the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, we have a lot of neighbors who participate and we are actually looking into the potential, being so close to New York City. That is always identified as something. It's just amazing how many people are using that to purchase food at markets. So I just know that from all my friends and neighbors who participate, that that is a key program.

Ms. Pingree. Great. Great, certainly.

Mr. Rea. I'd like to follow up a little bit. We're a little bit of a different animal, being a cooperative, but we've found the ability to have 1,200 of our members be farmer owned with our great Cabot brand and we get into stores with our farmers and they hand out samples. And we have a great relationship with our retailers, and it all comes from this farmer-owned and grassroots part of it.

Mr. Verratti. Yes, and I would echo that. I love local--and people in our community that know me, that see me at church or at other organizations love to buy our product, talk to me about it, and I can educate on it--on it some, and--and it's a great relationship.

Ms. Pingree. Thanks.

Ms. Ledoux. And I guess if I was to follow up, people truly want to know where their food is coming from. They want to talk directly to that farmer. They want to look them in the face and they want to say, I bought this product from you. I want to know that you grew it or you raised it, and you took care of it from the beginning to where it was processed and--and brought that--you know, whatever that is, if it's a vegetable or it's meat, that they know that you were the one that was involved in it. And we can do that.

Ms. Pingree. That's great. The chair mentioned that one of the big issues we're dealing with is budgetary constraints and what this new farm bill will look like. And I guess my particular interest is in figuring out, given the fact that this is where a lot of growth in the market is, where farmers are seeing huge opportunities, how do we make sure that some of the programs you've already been talking about, are there and available to farmers who want to expand into this market as we're sort of balancing out where our budgetary challenges are.

So are there other things that you think, and I know some of them have already been mentioned today, even programs like EQIP or Farm Credit, are certainly critical, but in my brief time available, anything else you want to throw in there that you just think, when it comes to helping farmers sell more locally, is of great advantage?

Ms. Ledoux. I mean, I guess I'm going--I'm going to put in my plug for Cooperative Extension and the Hatch Programs because they are directly working with farmers. They are directly out there talking with them. We are working with them, if it's telling them how to put in their vegetables, how to work with a small beef operation.

I mean, the reality is most beef operations in the United States are 20 cows, and New York State lends itself to that size operations. They're talking to them about doing rotational grazing. They're talking with them about having a small livestock operation, whether it's sheep or hogs, and people want to get involved with that kind of direct marketing.

Mr. Ooms. Applied research. Very simply, the Specialty Crop Block Grant is relatively new. It was an 2008 Farm Bill or the one before. And realize, you only have so much money in the world, you can't reinvent the wheel. But for future reference, I served on the New York Farm Viability Institute board and it's a farmer-led group that helps divvy up applied research dollars. And a lot of the grants that we're giving out are for new concepts or new ways even to help everyone though, but to help find new ways to skin the cat, I guess. So anything on applied research is always good because states have problems too.

Ms. Pingree. Thanks. I think I'm out of time. Thank you.

The Chairman. The gentlelady's time has expired. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from New York, Mr. Gibson, for 5 minutes.

Mr. Gibson. Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and I thank my colleagues for being here today and to say that this has been a very productive hearing already. In addition to what you've communicated this morning, we have detailed written statements from all of you and that's all going to be part of the record as we work through the farm bill for 2012, and I want to focus in on profitability.

We've hit on this in a number of different dialogues, but I'd like to have the opportunity to get you on the record in some areas that I think would also potentially help with profitability. As I look at it--and of course I'm biased--I think we've got the smartest, hardest working farmers in the world.

It's not an issue of knowledge. It's not an issue of work ethics. You guys work 24/7 and so we, I think it's incumbent upon us to really be looking at ways that we can ease the burden on you and to look to ways to facilitate your profitability. So let me throw out a few areas and then the panel can really just follow up. This is an opportunity to get you on the record.

Regulations, specifically CAFO, if you have recommendations on how that might be revised. Conservation, tremendous way for us to balance, ensuring that we bequeath future generations an environment that we can be proud of at the same time that we're helping you with your profitability.

We've mentioned EQIP here this morning. Might there be other ways to administer it? Is it best done in the NRCS or might we consider perhaps the FSA to administer that?

We haven't talked too much about the Farmer-Rancher Protection Program, but I can tell you in our district this is really a valued program that has helped us on that score.

Energy, are there ways--certainly we talked about margin, we talked about price for milk and how much you profit in the end, and energy has a certain component of this. And there have been programs, particularly with the photovoltaic and anaerobic digester, are these worthy and should we continue, and do you have recommendations on that end?

Broadband, we're working really hard to expand rural broadband. Is that helping? And do you have recommendations on that? And finally, markets. Is there anything specific, creative ideas that you have that may help get your product out to other areas that, all of this inclining towards profitability. I'll throw that open to the panel.

Mr. Rea. I'll take the first stab. Thank you for the question.

Regulations, it just so happens that our farm is bumping right up against an area where we need to invest heavily in CAFO, and we are reluctant to do that and I think that's probably tempering our growth. You go from 200 cows to 201 cows, all of a sudden you have to invest hundreds of thousands of dollars in--into the CAFO.

If we could phase this in somehow, Congressman Gibson, to-- I mean, 20 cows isn't going to cover this cost of the CAFO, and

we are in an area which, disappointing, has very little EQIP funds available. So everything has kind of taken on a new perspective when you have to pay for everything, whether you get any help or not through the government. And I'm not looking for help from the government, but I'm looking for ways where we can phase into this.

We're seeing attrition in the dairy industry, so we know that we need to have increased production from farms that are going to be viable. And if there's a way we can kind of move into this, you know. We--we have dug a manure pit. We did it with our own excavator. And if you get 201 cows, you got to have an engineer that's going to engineer that manure pit. Our pit holds more, and you know, we need just a little common sense here as we go forward into it, because we would like to produce milk for the future and be profitable.

Mr. Verratti. He's exactly right about, and I'll just talk about it, as far as CAFO. There's no doubt you're tempering growth with that--with that regulation just because it costs a lot more money, you get to certain sizes. I'm not sure what they are exactly, but I know that we're a medium CAFO, so we're going to have different regulations than--than Mr. Rea. So those regulations, all things shared, they cost money.

So EQIP's a help, it's definitely--it's a program we've received money from. It's definitely a help. But it's difficult when you need such a large organization to "bury" some of those costs to be able to move on with productivity and profitability. So that's important.

And you mentioned markets. I just think it's very important to allow us to continue to export as a nation. We need to be sending this milk overseas. We believe we have the most nutritious, best product in the world. And we want to be sending it out along with our--along with our discussion earlier about allowing it go to local markets also.

Mr. Ooms. It's pretty--I try to answer questions, but that was pretty open-ended, so it's probably intended that way.

I just want the panel to know that Congressman Gibson, before he was actually elected, said he wanted to spend time on a farm. And he's about, what, 3 miles from our place, so he came at quarter to 4:00 one morning and he ran the gamut. He milked cows and then he came back a couple months later because, he said, well, we milked cows with the machine, but I want to practice milking one manually because I'm in a cow milking contest. So we've got--I was going to bring the pictures for you, but we'll keep them for another time.

As far as--I guess from my family's perspective is, we try to be reasonable. We try to work with people. And we have a Right To Farm Law in New York that says we have a right to farm in certain areas. That doesn't mean we have a right to do whatever we want. We still need to be a good neighbor. And I guess I just can't get over all the different regulations that come upon us.

And the one that really gets me is: I make a choice to stay home on the farm. Somebody said earlier, they didn't get paid, I think it was the Chairman talking earlier about he didn't get paid until he went to work for someone else. And you know, I don't know if I should admit this or not, but I was 30 before I got paid on the farm. And it was only because I said to my dad, "Dad, I'm thinking about getting married here. So I'm going to be moving out. So I'm going to need to get paid."

And so my whole purpose of doing this was so I could--my kids could have the opportunities that I've had. And this is just one example. We are incorporated because that's just what makes sense for our business, so my kids legally couldn't work on the farm.

Now, whoever is enforcing this, Hilda Solis can come and pry my kids out of the farm and barn all they want. We're going to do it until they do that. But just let us have the opportunity to be--and again, we want to work with the people. You mentioned--I could go on for hours.

This is my last point, is: You mentioned the Chesapeake, the clean up of the Chesapeake, and see you're coming at it from a southern vantage point. I'll give the northern vantage point.

Our New York State DEC, which we in ag and DEC don't always get along, it's saying to me, that we could remove all human life forms from the Chesapeake Bay area that New York--just covered in New York, I think it's 21 counties. It's a good swath. Not where I am. They could remove all human life form and the water still won't be clear, clean enough. You know, let's use a little common sense. And you know, again, none of

us want dirty water, so I'll just--there you go.

The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired. The time for the first panel has expired. And I might note, Mr. Ooms, you could actually be an Okie if you want to come live with us some day too, by the way.

Mr. Ooms. No way.

The Chairman. With that, the Committee would like to thank the first panel for your insightful presentations and the questions and your answers, and you're dismissed. And we will ask the second panel to prepare to come forward.

The Chairman. We will now hear from our second panel of witnesses.

Mr. Eckhardt, whenever you're prepared, please begin.

STATEMENT OF LARRY ECKHARDT, VEGETABLE, FIELD CROP, AND BEEF PRODUCER; PRESIDENT, KINDERHOOK CREEK FARM, INC., STEPHENTOWN, NY

Mr. Eckhardt. Well, good morning, and thank you, Chairman Lucas, and other Members of the Committee for being here, and thank you for inviting me to offer some comments and ideas regarding the 2012 Farm Bill.

My name is Larry Eckhardt, and I'm a farmer from Stephentown in Rensselaer County in eastern New York. I also provide crop consulting and planning services to farms in my area as a certified crop adviser.

There are several pieces of the farm bill that are important to our farm and to vegetable growers in the state that I would like to highlight today.

Some general farm bill concerns: The farms in our area, including our own farm, were hit really hard last year by tropical storms of the summer and fall. In trying to recover from this damage, I think it's important that the 2012 Farm Bill continue to include Permanent Disaster Assistance and Emergency Conservation Programs. These are very important to helping farmers recover after unimaginable disasters, whether through the replanting of trees, with the help of the Tree Assistance Program, or replacing soil and fixing fields that were washed away through help with the Emergency Conservation monies, ECP.

We can't go back to ad hoc disaster assistance. Farmers need disaster assistance they can count on and which arrives in a timely manner. Programs that are sometimes years in getting financial assistance to farmers, like the SURE Program, are not very helpful in efforts and these types of programs would be better spent elsewhere.

Conservation is also an important piece of the farm bill, and New York farmers have worked hard to meet extremely lofty Federal and state standards. As been said before, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, EQIP, has provided critical funding and has helped leverage state and local monies to make sure farmers in the state continue to meet the ever increasing standards.

During these difficult economic times, I know there are going to be cuts to the farm bill, so I think it's important for Congress to focus on its conservation efforts on working lands programs like EQIP and the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program. Over the other programs, like Land Retirement, keeping vital and productive lands in production and protecting the environment at the same time should be where goals, the goals where funds are limited.

I would further suggest that the 2012 Farm Bill, that the role of NRCS be returned to its real and original purpose, and that's providing technical assistance to farmers for installing their needed practices, and leave the handling of the funding--the funds for cost sharing the projects, to the FSA. NRCS personnel have time and again told me that they are not trained in administering the funding of conservation, they're trained to help farmers make conservation practices work. I agree and believe that the FSA is better trained in handling the funds for conservation programs.

While mentioning FSA, I'd like to voice a strong opposition to the closing of local FSA offices in our region and around the country. These critical offices administer all the programs that are now in effect including insurance and other reporting and new requirements for farms to comply with programs. How can we do this with fewer offices and what little, if any, money is going to be saved? I'm all for saving, and I think everyone else is, but let's begin where it might make a difference. Not by eliminating the people and offices that, for us, are the

front line, and for most real farmers are the real face of USDA.

I move to some specialty crop specific concerns. New York is largely a state of dairy and specialty crops, and that's why it's important that the farm bill reflect the type of agriculture we have here in New York and around the Northeast. Specialty crops have been notoriously under-served in previous farm bill legislation and that's why it's so important that specialty crops was included in the 2008 Farm Bill and I hope will remain in the 2012 Farm Bill.

The Specialty Crops Block Grants have been important to many farmers, both large and small, by supporting research, marketing and market development, and critical Pest Management Programs that help increase our profitability and our sustainability. The funds from other public sources for research and development in the area of specialty crops have been cut dramatically over the past 2 decades.

These Specialty Crops Block Grants have made substantial contributions to new business development, new products, new and improved growing methods for the producers in New York. I hope for continued and perhaps increased funding for this important part of the new farm bill.

I don't think it's any secret that crop insurance doesn't serve specialty crop farmers very well, especially not multi-crop farms like my own. The devastating weather events of 2011 have only served to highlight the need for some major changes in several areas.

I would suggest a few ways for the farm bill to be more responsive to specialty crop risk management needs and they are: First, I'm not an economist or an actuary, I can only suggest some ideas for a crop insurance program that will meet our specialty crop needs. But we'll need to help the USDA figure out how to make them actuarially sound.

I think Congress should instruct the USDA in the next farm bill to research and development with input from actual growers of specialty crops, risk management tools that will work more effectively for diverse crop farms. Being diversified helps manage our risks to a large degree, but as we saw last year, there are no options that work well in near complete or complete losses that help farmers get back on their feet.

The Noninsured Disaster Assistance Program, known as NAP, is the only coverage offered for most nontraditional specialty crops. But in the event of a complete loss, it really only provides remuneration for $\frac{1}{4}$ or less of the lost crop. When there is a partial loss--loss in a crop, most often there is no coverage at all. There should be a buy up option so farmers can better protect themselves and manage their own risks.

Although NAP is pretty cost effective, the record keeping can become overwhelming for farmers who have many crops, and on my case, maybe 30 or more. And record keeping should be streamlined so more farmers would participate and be eligible for disaster assistance programs. Other revisions such as sign up deadlines, acreage reporting, yield history, type of production, whether you're organic or conventional, multiple planting dates and training of loss adjusters would have to be addressed to make the program more appropriate for growers.

And while we're talking about crop insurance, it seems it would just--we would pay less indemnification on insurance policies or NAP or at least more or would less frequently pay out if some of our rivers and streams were better maintained. We have seen extreme sediment deposits and obstructions in our many streams and tributaries caused by a lack of planned and routine care. Although allowing the trained NRCS staff to help farmers responsibly clear and shape these waterways to prevent widespread flooding, it would substantially benefit our farms and help mitigate the effects of the excessive rainfall in our communities in the future. This benefit can only be accomplished if the U.S. Corps of Engineers and the EPA are required to cooperate, perhaps through the 2012 Farm Bill.

Some nutrition programs in the farm bill are also important to specialty crop farmers. The Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Snack Program for Schools and the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program are two of the many programs that help link our farmers with the people who most need the access to fresh and healthy foods. Any program that supports local food purchases and helps develop new distribution networks will be a great benefit to both farmers like myself and the people who need the access to the food I grow.

There are a number of provisions in the present farm bill for organic certification and research and is certainly an

important piece of specialty crop agriculture, and I hope it continues. In this economy, I see many farmers using organic methods, but not able to spend enough money or commit the time to complete the certification. Instead, their focus, and that of many farms, has shifted to serving a market seeking out local foods.

Whether it's certified organic, organically grown or grown conventionally, consumers want to know where their food is coming from and who grew those crops. Because of this, I think it's important for the 2012 Farm Bill to include funding for the programs that help all farmers who direct market, no matter what production techniques they use. This means developing food distribution networks, supporting the Farmers Market Promotion Program, supporting the food-based entrepreneurship programs and other grant opportunities. These programs help provide--improve the vitality of all farms--family farms in the areas of the country.

And finally, the proposed new regulations for food safety are due out soon and diversified farms like mine are concerned how this will change our business. Food safety begins on the farm and is certainly a primary concern on my farm. We work hard to ensure it every day in whatever way we can, but not knowing what is in these regulations and how hard it will be to comply with them scares me.

If the farm bill can provide farmers assistance in meeting these new standards, whether with needed training on the ground assistance from USDA or tools to implement new procedures, this farm bill would certainly help in that effort.

Thank you again for the invitation to speak today, and any questions, I would be happy to answer them.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Eckhardt follows:]

Prepared Statement of Larry Eckhardt, Vegetable, Field Crop, and Beef Producer; President, Kinderhook Creek Farm, Inc., Stephentown, NY
Chairman Lucas, Congressman Peterson, Congressman Owens, Congressman Gibson, and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me today to offer comments and ideas regarding the 2012 Farm Bill. My name is Larry Eckhardt and I'm a farmer from Stephentown, Rensselaer County, in Eastern New York State. I also provide crop consulting and planning services to farms in my area as a certified crop advisor.

There are several pieces of the farm bill that are important to our farm and to the vegetable growers in the state that I would like to highlight for you today.

General Farm Bill Concerns

The farms in our area, including our own farm, were really hit hard by the tropical storms of last summer and fall. In trying to recover from this damage, I think that it is important the 2012 Farm Bill continue to include permanent disaster assistance and emergency conservation programs.

These are very important to helping farmers recover after an unimaginable disaster, whether through replanting trees with the help of the Tree Assistance Program (TAP) or replacing soil or fixing fields that were washed away through help from the Emergency Conservation Program monies (ECP). We can't go back to ad hoc disaster assistance; farmers need disaster assistance they can count on and which arrives in a timely manner. Programs that are sometimes years in getting financial assistance to farmers (like SURE) are not very helpful and the efforts in these types of programs would be better spent elsewhere.

Conservation is an important piece of the farm bill and New York farmers have worked hard to meet extremely lofty Federal and state standards. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) has provided critical funding and has helped leverage state and local monies to make sure farmers in the state continue to meet ever-increasing standards.

During these difficult economic times, I know there will be cuts in the farm bill, so I think it is important for Congress to focus its conservation efforts on working lands programs, like EQIP and the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, over the easement and land retirement type programs. Keeping vital and productive lands in production and protecting the environment at the same time should be our goals when funds are limited.

I would further suggest for the 2012 Farm Bill that the role of NRCS be returned to its real and original purpose--providing technical assistance to farmers for installing needed practices--and leave the handling of the funds for cost-sharing these practices to FSA. NRCS personnel have time and again told me that they are not trained in administering the funding of conservation--they are trained to help farmers make conservation practices work. I agree and believe that FSA is better trained in handling the funds for conservation programs.

While mentioning FSA, I'd like to voice strong opposition to closing local FSA offices in our region. These critical offices administer all the programs now in effect, insurance, reporting and any new requirements for farms to comply with programs--how can we do this with fewer offices? And what little, if any, money is saved? I'm all for saving, but let's begin where it might make a difference, not by eliminating the people and offices on the front lines, who, for most of the real farmers, are the face of the USDA.

Specialty Crop-Specific Concerns

New York is largely a state of dairy and specialty crops, that's why it's important that the farm bill reflect the type of agriculture we have here in New York and the Northeast. Specialty crops have been notoriously under-served in previous farm bill legislation and that's why it was so important that a specialty crops title was included in the 2008 Farm Bill and I hope will remain in the 2012 Farm Bill.

The Specialty Crops Block Grants have been important to many farmers, large and small, by supporting research, marketing and market development, and critical pest management programs that help increase our profitability and sustainability. The funds from other public sources for research and development in the area of specialty crops have been cut dramatically over the last 2 decades.

These Specialty Crops Block Grants have made substantial contributions to new business development, new products and new and improved growing methods for producers in New York. I hope for continued, and perhaps, increased funding for this important part of the new farm bill.

I don't think it's a secret that crop insurance doesn't serve specialty crop farmers well, especially not multi-crop farms like mine. The devastating weather events of 2011 have only served to highlight the need for some major changes in several areas. I would suggest a few ways for the farm bill to be more responsive to specialty crop risk management needs:

First, I'm not an economist or an actuary. I can only suggest some ideas for a crop insurance program that will meet our specialty crop needs, but we need the help of USDA to figure out how to make them actuarially sound. I think Congress should instruct the USDA in the next farm bill to research and develop, with input from actual growers of specialty crops, risk management tools that will work more effectively for diverse crop farms. Being diversified helps manage our risk to a large degree, but as we saw last year, there are no options that work well in near complete or complete losses to help farmers get back on their feet.

The Non-Insured Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) is the only coverage offered for most nontraditional specialty crops, but in the event of a complete loss, it really only provides remuneration for a quarter or less of my lost crop. When there is a partial loss, most often there is no coverage at all. There should be a buy-up option so farmers can better protect themselves and manage their individual risk. Although NAP is pretty cost-effective, the record-keeping can become overwhelming for farmers who have many crops--maybe 30 or more--and recordkeeping should be streamlined so more farmers would participate and be eligible for the disaster assistance programs. Other revisions, such as sign-up deadlines, acreage reporting, yield histories, type of production (organic or conventional), multiple planting dates and training of loss adjusters would have to be addressed to make the program more appropriate for growers.

While we're talking about crop insurance, it just seems we would have to pay less indemnification on insurance policies or NAP, much less frequently, if some of our rivers and streams were better maintained. We have seen extreme sediment deposits and obstructions in many of our streams and tributaries caused by the lack of planned, routine care. Allowing the trained NRCS staff to help farmers responsibly clear and shape these waterways to prevent widespread flooding, it would substantially benefit our farms and help mitigate the effects of excessive rainfall on all our communities in the future. This benefit can only be accomplished if the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and the EPA are required to cooperate, perhaps through the 2012 Farm Bill.

Nutrition programs in the farm bill are also important to specialty crop farmers. The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program for schools and the Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program are two of the many programs that help link our farmers with the people who most need

access to fresh, healthy foods. Any program that supports local food purchases and helps develop new distribution networks will be a great benefit to both farmers like myself and the people who need access to the food I grow.

There are a number of provisions in the present farm bill for organic certification and research and this is certainly an important piece of specialty crop agriculture. However, in this economy, I see many farmers using organic methods, but not able to spend the money or commit the time to complete their certification. Instead, their focus and that of many farmers has shifted to serving a market seeking out local foods.

Whether it's certified organic, grown organically, or grown conventionally, consumers want to know where their food is coming from and who grew the crops. Because of this, I think it is important for the 2012 Farm Bill to include funding for programs that help all farmers who direct market, no matter what production techniques they use. This means developing food distribution networks, supporting the Farmers Market Promotion Program, supporting food-based entrepreneurship programs, and other grant opportunities. These programs all help improve the viability of all family farms in all areas of the country.

And finally, the proposed new regulations for food safety are due out soon and diversified farms like mine are concerned with how this will change our business. Food safety begins on the farm and is certainly a primary concern on my farm. We work hard at ensuring it every day, in whatever way we can, but not knowing what is in these regulations and how hard it will be to comply with them scares me. If the farm bill can provide farmers assistance in meeting these new standards, whether with needed training, on-the-ground assistance from USDA, or tools to implement new procedures, this farm bill could certainly help that effort.

These have been several of the issues of the upcoming farm bill that I think are most important to diversified vegetable farms like mine. Thank you again for the invitation to speak today and if you have any questions, I am always happy to answer them.

The Chairman. Thank you.
Mr. Osborn, you're recognized.

STATEMENT OF SCOTT OSBORN, WINE GRAPE PRODUCER; PRESIDENT, FOX RUN VINEYARD, INC., PENN YAN, NY

Mr. Osborn. Thank you. Good morning. Thank you for asking me to speak here today. I would like to thank you for taking the time to come all the way up here to listen to our thoughts on the upcoming farm bill.

My name is Scott Osborn, and I own Fox Run Vineyards, which is a medium-sized winery in the Finger Lakes of New York. I have 50 acres of vinifera grapes which are the classic European varieties that I can grow due to the maritime influence of the large and deep Finger Lakes.

I'm the current President of the New York Wine Industry Association and the past President of the Finger Lakes Wine Alliance, past President of the Seneca Lake Winery Association, and I was presented with an industry award from the New York Wine & Grape Foundation for my contributions to the New York wine industry. I'm also a member of Wine America and the New York Farm Bureau.

The 2008 Farm Bill was historic in that for the first time ever specialty crops were officially recognized and supported in various ways. Grapes are a specialty crop, yet are the sixth largest dollar volume crop produced in the U.S. In New York alone, grapes, grape juice and wine generates more than \$3.76 billion in economic benefits to the State of New York. And the national industry generates more than a \$162 billion for the American economy.

For the new farm bill, my main concerns are crop insurance, research and market access programs. Crop insurance for grape growers is a big issue here on the East Coast. Although it has improved significantly in New York over the last 5 years, there are still a number of problems which need to be addressed.

We are asking that you continue the premium subsidy to continue to get more buy in by growers. If you remove it and it costs too much, no one will participate.

It would be nice if the harvest deduction was removed. Currently, grape growers are getting hit twice with this cost: Once when it is subtracted from the indemnity they get, and then again by the adjuster.

This is a fee that is just charged grape growers for not picking their grapes. And every grape grower picks their

grapes, so it is sort of problematic.

The price per ton we are paid on a claim should be based on a 5 year average on either the contracted price or a regional average to reflect the real time market value as opposed to the current 10 year average. I also think that RMA and the USDA need to better educate their employees in other states where there is an emerging grape and wine industry, so they can understand the grape industry and they can be of help rather than an obstacle.

We could use insurance for our new plantings. And this is something many people don't understand, we are a permanent crop, which makes us very different from other agriculture.

Our installation costs are extreme. For example, it costs approximately \$18,000 per acre to plant an acre of grapes, and it is around 4 years before the first harvest. We still have to farm it all this time, which runs \$4,000+ per acre per year to farm. So the investment over 4 years is about \$30,000 per acre. If you add in that we may be removing an under-performing variety and replanting for a more profitable variety, you are looking at, easily, a \$50,000 investment per acre.

If there's an environmental event which significantly damages or destroys the new vines, we have no way of recouping our investment. So some form of insurance would be a great help for that.

In addition, moving the closing date for the MPCI, Multiple Peril Crop Insurance policies, to December 1st. The current date of November 20th is very close to the end of grape harvest, and in some cases people are still harvesting. Having an extra 10 days or so would be helpful by allowing the grower to make an intelligent decision rather than an impulse one.

The specialty crop title of the farm bill was an important addition to the last bill, and I hope this remains. The Northeast is mostly made up of specialty crop producers, and this recognition is helpful to the success of farming in our area.

The Specialty Crops Research Initiative, the Agricultural Research Service, IPM programs and block grants are all very important for grapes and other fruit and vegetable crops. A number of northern universities, through their grape breeding programs, have been able to develop grape varieties which can withstand subzero temperatures. This has allowed areas in the Northeast to develop a grape and wine industry that did not exist 5 years ago. The more funding towards research gives us more opportunities to develop our industry, providing more jobs and making our businesses more profitable and more competitive.

The farm bill should continue to include export assistance programs such as the Market Access Program, which allows farmers to be competitive in a global market. Both the New York Wine & Grape Foundation and Welch's grape juice have received MAP funding in recent years, and this allows our wines and juice products from New York to expand current markets and explore new opportunities. Driving demand for our grape products directly helps farmers become more profitable.

In summary, the last farm bill was a promising start, but needs to be continued and expanded so that specialty crops can contribute even more to the American agricultural economy.

Thank you for letting me testify today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Osborn follows:]

Prepared Statement of Scott Osborn, Wine Grape Producer; President, Fox Run Vineyard, Inc., Penn Yan, NY

Good morning! Thank you for asking me to speak here today. I would like to thank you for taking the time to come all the way up here to listen to our thoughts on the upcoming farm bill.

My name is Scott Osborn and I own Fox Run Vineyards which is a medium sized winery in the Finger Lakes of New York. I have 50 acres of vinifera grapes which are the classic European varieties which I can grow because of the maritime influence of the Large and deep Finger Lakes. I am the current President of the New York Wine Industry Association, past President of the Finger Lakes Wine Alliance, Past President of the Seneca Lake Winery Association and was presented with the Industry Award from the New York Wine and Grape Foundation for my contributions to the New York Wine Industry. I am also a member of Wine America and the New York Farm Bureau.

The 2008 Farm Bill was historic in that for the first time ever "specialty crops" were officially recognized and supported in various ways.

Grapes are a specialty crop yet are the 6th largest dollar volume crop produced in the U.S. In New York alone grapes, grape juice, and wine generates more than \$3.76 billion in economic benefits to the

state of New York, and the national industry generates more than \$162 billion for the American economy.

For the new farm bill my main concerns are Crop Insurance, Research, and Market Access programs.

Crop insurance for grape growers is a big issue here on the East Coast. Although it has improved significantly here in New York over the last 5 years there are still a number of problems which need to be addressed. We are asking that you continue the premium subsidy to continue to get more buy in by growers. If it costs too much no one will participate.

It would be nice if the harvest deduction (\$30) was removed. Currently grape growers are getting hit twice with this cost once when it is subtracted from the indemnity they get and then again by the adjuster.

The price per ton we are paid on a claim should be based on a 5 year average on either the contracted price or a regional average to reflect real time market value as opposed to the current 10 year average. I also think that RMA and USDA need to educate their employees in other states, where there is an emerging grape and wine industry, better so they can understand the grape industry so they can be of help rather than an obstacle.

We could use insurance on our new plantings. We are a permanent crop. Our installation costs are extreme. For example it costs approximately \$18,000 per acre to plant an acre of grapes. It is around 4 years before you get your first harvest. We have to farm it all this time which runs \$4,000+ an acre each year to farm. So the investment over 4 years is \$30,000. If you add in that we may be removing an under performing variety and replanting for a more profitable variety you are looking at easily a \$50,000 investment per acre. If there is an environmental event which significantly damages or destroys the new vines we have no way of recouping our investment. So some form of insurance would be a big help.

Also move the closing date for MPCCI (multiple peril crop insurance) policies to Dec. 1. The current date of Nov 20th is very close to the end of grape harvest and in some cases people are still harvesting. Having an extra 10 days or so would be helpful by allowing the grower to make an intelligent decision rather than an impulse one.

The specialty crop title of the farm bill was an important addition to the last bill and I hope this remains. The Northeast is mostly made up of specialty crop producers and this recognition is helpful to the success of farming in our areas. The Specialty Crops research initiative, the Agricultural Research Service, IPM programs, and Block Grants are all very important for grapes and other fruit and vegetable crops. A number of Northern University's through their grape breeding programs have been able to develop grape varieties which can withstand subzero temperatures that have allowed areas in the North East to develop a grape and wine industry that didn't exist 5 years ago. So the more funding towards research gives us more opportunities to develop our industry providing more jobs and making our businesses more profitable and more competitive.

The farm bill should continue to include export assistance programs, such as the Market Access Program (MAP), which allow farmers to be competitive in a global market. Both the New York Wine and Grape Foundation and Welch's grape juice have received MAP funding in recent years and this allows our wines and Juice products from New York to expand current markets and explore new opportunities. Driving demand for our grape products directly helps farmers become more profitable.

In summary, the last farm bill was a promising start, but needs to be continued and expanded so that specialty crops can contribute even more to the American agricultural economy.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Child, you may begin when you're ready.

STATEMENT OF RALPH CHILD, SEED POTATO AND LEAFY GREENS
PRODUCER, OWNER/OPERATOR, CHILDSTOCK FARMS, INC., MALONE, NY

Mr. Child. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My name is Ralph Child. I'm a fourth-generation produce farmer from Malone, New York. I grow 300 acres each of seed potatoes and leafy greens. I am active in the Empire State Potato Growers and the National Potato Council. Both organizations are active members of the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance, a coalition of more than 100 specialty crop associations, companies and cooperatives across the U.S.

I want to highlight the importance of several key issues included in the farm bill and a couple of issues that, while beyond the scope of the farm bill, remain critical to my continued success as a specialty crop grower in upstate New York.

Prior to the 2008 Farm Bill, the needs and concerns of the specialty crop producers were not considered while establishing national farm policy. The inclusion in the 2008 Farm Bill of specialty crop programs designed to improve industry competitiveness was an important first step in making modern farm programs accurately reflect the mix of agriculture in the United States. Importantly, specialty crop producers requested Federal support for industry programs that were designed to maintain and improve competitiveness and not to provide compensation to growers nor to distort the specialty crop marketplace.

Research is critically important to our industry's ability to continue to improve our productivity and to make nutritious fruits and vegetables available to consumers as economically as possible. The 2008 Farm Bill established two important programs that are producing research results that meet key needs for growers. The Specialty Crop Research Initiative provides competitive funding for multi-disciplinary, multi-state research projects that address critical industry needs. These are large projects that cover problems in a multi-state area.

Since specialty crop production is so regionally diverse, Congress also wisely included the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program in the 2008 Farm Bill to address local needs. This program, as administered by the State Departments of Agriculture, is meeting the priorities of smaller growers like me whose needs for research and technical assistance might otherwise be overlooked.

Increased access to foreign markets is also vital to the overall health of the industry. Many of our global competitors are able to produce and deliver specialty crops in a more cost effective way due to assistance from their own governments. Programs that enable U.S. producers to gain a foothold in a developing market are essential to growing our business domestically and contributing to a strong economy. The Market Access Program allows U.S. growers to do just that.

MAP funds have enabled potato growers in the United States to market and export potatoes and potato products to significant economies all over the world, including the top export markets of Japan, China, Korea, and Mexico. U.S. potato industry is able to complement the funding it receives through MAP with other trade promoting programs including the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops Program.

TASC is crucial to maintaining market access in the face of sanitary and phytosanitary issues that can threaten to block U.S. specialty crops from critical markets. The value of TASC to the specialty crop industry cannot be overstated.

Like any part of agriculture, and perhaps even more so, specialty crops are susceptible to plant pests and disease. Pests and disease can cut yield, hurt quality, and if the pest is a quarantined pest or a highly regulated pest, it can completely close off markets for our products.

An example of a regulated pest that has the potential to wreak havoc on market access and devastate our local economy is the golden nematode. Since the quarantine is working, we are able to conduct business without serious consequences. With proper pest and disease programs, many of these issues can be identified early and possibly avoided altogether.

A significant step forward for our industry in the 2008 Farm Bill was the increased investment in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. The Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program allows APHIS to address plant pests early and proactively.

Although it is not addressed directly in the farm bill, I do want to call the Committee's attention to need for adequate appropriations for the APHIS line item that funds the Golden Nematode Program in New York. That funding is important both to New York growers as well as to potato growers across the U.S.

Finally, with the expected movement in the 2012 Farm Bill towards reliance on insurance products and away from direct and countercyclical payments, there needs to be a thoughtful discussion about crop insurance needs in the specialty crop industry. For specialty crop growers, annual planting decisions are based upon market indicators. There is a significant risk of distorting or destabilizing markets when incentive exists to make planting decisions based on crop or revenue insurance instead of those market indicators. I hope the Committee will look closely at the potential market distorting impacts of insurance programs using price or revenue loss triggers.

Major policy strides were made in the 2008 Farm Bill for

specialty crops, and we hope to build on those strides in the 2012 Farm Bill. However, without a skilled agricultural work force, the best farm bill policies will not have their intended effect. The specialty crop industry is labor intensive and programs like mandatory E-Verify, without an agricultural worker program, would have extraordinarily negative consequences to growers like me.

Since I farm close to the northern border, I understand firsthand the consequences of an enforcement-only immigration policy. I currently participate in the H-2A Program out of necessity, not because I think it is a viable long-term option. Any desire to further invest in my business is dampened by concerns about the long-term direction of immigration policy. I urge you to work with your colleagues in the House of Representatives to approve a comprehensive immigration policy that provides an opportunity for existing agricultural workers to earn a legal status, creates a viable Guest Worker Program, and secures our nation's borders.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Committee. I respectfully request that the entirety of my remarks, which are more specific on key issues, be included in the record.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Child follows:]

Prepared Statement of Ralph Child, Seed Potato and Leafy Greens Producer; Owner/Operator, Childstock Farms, Inc., Malone, NY

My name is Ralph Child. I grow 300 acres each of seed potatoes and leafy greens in Malone, New York. I am active in the Empire State Potato Growers and the National Potato Council. Both organizations are active members of the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance (SCFBA)—a coalition of more than 100 specialty crop associations, companies, and cooperatives across the United States. I want to highlight the importance of several key issues included in the farm bill and a couple issues that while beyond the scope of the farm bill remain critical to my continued success as a specialty crop grower in Upstate New York.

Prior to the 2008 Farm Bill, the needs and concerns of specialty crop producers were not considered while establishing national farm policy. The inclusion in the 2008 Farm Bill of specialty crop programs designed to improve industry competitiveness was an important first step in making modern farm programs accurately reflect the mix of agriculture in the United States. Importantly, specialty crop producers requested Federal support for industry programs that were designed to maintain and improve competitiveness and not to provide compensation to growers nor to distort the specialty crop marketplace.

Research is critically important to our industry's ability to continue to improve our productivity and to make nutritious fruits and vegetables available to consumers as economically as possible. Improvements in our nation's health are directly linked to expanding the availability and consumption of more fruits and vegetables. The 2008 Farm Bill established two important programs that are producing research results that meet key needs for growers. The Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) provides competitive funding for multidisciplinary, multi-state research projects that address critical industry needs. These are big projects with big promise to solve big problems. Since specialty crop production is so regionally diverse, Congress also wisely included the Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) program in the 2008 Farm Bill to address local needs. This program as administered by the state departments of agriculture is meeting the priorities of smaller growers like me whose needs for research and technical assistance might otherwise be overlooked.

Increased access to foreign markets is also vital to the overall health of our industry. Many of our global competitors are able to produce and deliver specialty crops in a more cost effective way due to assistance from their own governments. Programs that enable U.S. producers to gain a foothold in a developing market are essential to growing our businesses domestically and contributing to a strong economy. The Market Access Program (MAP) allows U.S. growers to do just that. MAP funds have enabled potato growers in the United States to market and export potatoes and potato products to significant economies all over the world, including the top export markets of Japan, China, Korea, and Mexico. The U.S. potato industry is able to complement the funding it receives through MAP with other trade promoting programs including the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) program. TASC is crucial to maintaining market access in the face of sanitary and phytosanitary issues that can threaten to block U.S. specialty crops from critical markets. The value of TASC to the specialty crop industry cannot be overstated.

Like any part of agriculture and perhaps even more so, specialty crops are susceptible to plant pests and disease. Pests and disease can cut yield, hurt quality, and if the pest is a quarantine pest or a highly regulated pest, it can completely close off markets for our

products. An example of a regulated pest that has the potential to wreak havoc on market access and devastate our local economy is the Golden Nematode. Since the quarantine is working, we are able to conduct business without serious consequences. With proper pest and disease programs, many of these issues can be identified early and possibly avoided altogether. A significant step forward for our industry in the 2008 Farm Bill was the increased investment in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). The Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention program allows APHIS to address plant pests early and proactively. Although it is not addressed directly in the farm bill I do want to call the Committee's attention to the need for adequate appropriations for the APHIS line item that funds the Golden Nematode Program in New York. That funding is important both to New York potato growers as well as potato growers across the U.S.

Finally, with the expected movement in the 2012 Farm Bill toward a reliance on insurance products and away from direct and counter cyclical payments, there needs to be a thoughtful discussion about the crop insurance needs in the specialty crop industry. For specialty crop growers, annual planting decisions are based upon market indicators. There is a significant risk of distorting or destabilizing markets when an incentive exists to make planting decisions based on crop or revenue insurance instead of those market indicators. I hope the Committee will look closely at the potential market distorting impacts of insurance programs using price or revenue loss triggers.

Major policy strides were made in the 2008 Farm Bill for specialty crops and we hope to build on those strides in the 2012 Farm Bill. Without a skilled agricultural workforce, the best farm bill policies will not have their intended effect. The specialty crop industry is labor intensive. A skilled labor force on a seed potato and leafy green farm is not very accessible to begin with and programs like mandatory e-Verify without an agricultural worker program would have extraordinarily negative consequences to growers like me. Since I farm close to the northern border, I understand firsthand the consequences of an enforcement-only immigration policy. I currently participate in the H-2A program out of necessity, not because I think it is a viable long-term option. Any desire to further invest in my business is dampened by concerns about the long-term direction of immigration policy. A flexible, realistic, and market-based agricultural guest worker program would enable me to more effectively do what I do best. I urge you to work with your colleagues in the House of Representatives to approve a comprehensive immigration policy that provides an opportunity for existing agriculture workers to earn a legal status, creates a viable guest worker program and secures our nation's borders.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Committee. I respectfully request that the entirety of my remarks which are more specific on key issues, be included in the record.

Specialty Crop Research Initiative

The specialty crop industry accounts for half the farm gate value of plant-based agriculture in the United States. While many of our global competitors enjoy state subsidization, U.S. producers prefer support and funding for essential programs that enable the industry to be competitive at home and in foreign markets. The Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) has emerged as an essential tool to foster competitiveness. In the U.S. potato industry for example, \$2,381,759 provided by an SCRI grant allowed researchers from USDA's Agricultural Research Service in Ithaca and cooperators from across the country to develop and implement management strategies for Potato Virus Y as well as the eradication of necrotic variants of the virus that were introduced into the United States. Other research priorities have also been addressed through SCRI, including Zebra Chip research with project leaders in Texas and the development of varieties of potatoes with lower acrylamide as a result of research directed from Wisconsin. The program has been so successful and universally popular in the specialty crop industry that specialty crop producers recommend increasing the funding to \$100 million per year of mandatory funds. Under current farm law, SCRI is not included in baseline funding and will not continue in the next farm bill unless action is taken to address funding. The effectiveness of SCRI could be improved by allowing greater flexibility in the administration of the program. Specific improvements include reduction of the 100 percent matching requirements, increasing stakeholder input, the inclusion of Federal and state marketing orders and commissions for consideration, and review by industry stakeholders for relevance prior to the scientific review.

Specialty Crop Block Grants

The Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) program is also of critical importance to the specialty crop industry by empowering regionally-specific research to be conducted on a state-by-state and multi-state basis. In 2011, there were ten projects valued at a total of just over \$1 million awarded in the state of New York, including extensive

partnerships with researchers at Cornell University. Nationwide, about \$55 million for the SCBG projects will be available in 2012. The program's effectiveness is clearly understood by the specialty crop industry, and with a few minor improvements could be even more responsive to the needs of the industry, including grower-level projects, strengthened definitions and the use of designated funds according to those definitions, increased emphasis on competitiveness and expansion of multi-state projects. Based on this experience, the specialty crop industry supports increasing funding by \$5 million per year. This would translate to \$350 million in mandatory funding over 5 years.

Market Access Program

The specialty crop industry is heavily reliant upon a robust export economy for continued success in the United States. For example, one in six rows of potatoes grown in the country today are destined for foreign markets, or more than double the amount we exported in 2000. One of the most important tools in this success story is the Market Access Program (MAP), which provided \$6.1 million in funding for the U.S. Potato Board, the national marketing and promotion organization for the U.S. potato industry. Since 2000, potato exports to countries targeted with MAP funds has grown by 68%. Exports are a major reason that the agricultural economy has been so strong in recent years and a much-needed bright spot during the current national economic downturn. Not only does it make economic sense as an investment, it also allows U.S. growers to more effectively compete with their global competitors, many of whom enjoy significant advantages in the form of subsidization. As you might expect, MAP enjoys an immense level of popularity within the specialty crop industry and the Alliance fully supports continued mandatory funding at the current level of \$200 million per year.

Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops

Considering the significant stake that the specialty crop industry has in the export market, the industry is always looking out for technical barriers to trade that can close down markets for sanitary and phytosanitary reasons. The Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) program is the vehicle to address these trade barriers in a timely fashion. TASC was originally designed to be a nimble and effective way to help the private sector resolve technical barriers to trade. These barriers can emerge unexpectedly and require fast action to prevent market closures and trade disruptions in established markets. Given the value and effectiveness of TASC, the Alliance recommends continued mandatory funding at \$9 million per year.

Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention

Commonly referred to as Section 10201, the Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention program in the 2008 Farm Bill allows funds to be used for early plant pest detection and surveillance, for threat identification and mitigation of plant pests and diseases, and for technical assistance in the development and implementation of audit-based certification systems and nursery plant pest risk management systems. This program is highly effective and allows USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to address potential pest and disease issues proactively rather than reactively. Section 10201 is currently funded at a level of \$50 million per year and the Alliance recommends \$75 million in mandatory funding per year.

National Clean Plant Network

The National Clean Plant Network (NCPN), or Section 10202, is a program also administered by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service under which a partnership of clean plant centers are organized to provide high quality asexually propagated plant material free of targeted plant pathogens and pests that cause economic loss to protect the environment and ensure the global competitiveness of specialty crop producers. NCPN is funded through 2012 at \$5 million per year but does not have baseline funding in the next farm bill. The Alliance recommends mandatory funding of \$10 million per year for the National Clean Plant Network.

The Chairman. They will indeed be included in the record, and thank you, Mr. Child.

Mr. Sullivan, begin whenever you're ready.

STATEMENT OF ADAM F. SULLIVAN, APPLE PRODUCER; ORCHARD FOREMAN, SULLIVAN ORCHARDS, INC., PERU, NY

Mr. Sullivan. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the Committee. I'd also like to recognize Congressmen Bill Owens and Chris Gibson, and thank you both on behalf of the industry. If you could please let Ranking Member Peterson know that a grower from upstate New York wore purple so that the Minnesota Vikings can get the stadium passed, I would be most appreciative.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today about

the impact of the 2008 Farm Bill and priorities for 2012 legislation. My name is Adam Sullivan of Sullivan Orchards, and I'm a fourth-generation apple grower from Peru, New York. Due to the time constraints, I'd like to encourage all of you, if you have not had the opportunity, to review and read the written testimony that I have submitted.

The written testimony provides excellent detail of many issues facing and impacting growers across this country in which the farm bill has been very effective in assisting growers, whether it is the Specialty Crop Research Initiative, which is playing a critical role in slowing down the damage caused by the newly invasive brown marmorated stink bug, or the Tree Assistance Program which help growers, many of whom are located in the Champlain Valley, recover losses from catastrophic tree loss sustained from an early thaw followed by extensive cold weather, which in turn killed the trees.

Today I'd like to spend the remainder of my time teaching you about three specific issues regarding the farm bill. These issues are the Market Access Program, crop insurance and, of course, labor.

Exports are extremely important to the apple industry with nearly 30 percent of the fresh crop destined for overseas markets. The export market is critical for the Empire variety, which is the second most grown variety in New York State. Empires are exported throughout the European Union, recently as far as Singapore, to name a few, and all thanks to MAP funding.

The apple industry strongly supports the Market Access Program which has helped level the playing field as we compete with countries such as China and Chile who have a much lower cost of production. MAP is a public-private partnership with growers contributing \$2 for every Federal dollar the industry receives. While my company only exports a small portion of our crop, every apple exported is one less apple I have to battle shelf space for.

Now I'd like to change gears and tell you a brief story. In 1983, on a Saturday afternoon in late August, about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, a storm fell over the orchard and we could hear the hailstones pinging off the metal roof. I remember seeing my father watch as the stones piled in the driveway. After about 5 minutes it stopped. Dad went out to evaluate the crop. He came back ``annoyed" that this had happened, but the crop was salvageable. Then 5:30 came, and the real storm began.

I don't remember how long it lasted, but I remember him staring out the window with my mother consoling him. It was determined that a tornado landed less than a mile away and pummeled the apples. I was 6. The crop was so severely destroyed that mom and dad were only able to sell one load of juice. That year's crop fermented on the orchard. The real kicker was that he didn't have crop insurance. It took them more than a decade, through hard work and God's good will, that they got the orchard financially secured again.

The second issue I'd like to discuss is the Federal Crop Insurance Program. Over the years, the industry has worked closely with USDA's Risk Management Agency. As a result, significant improvements to the apple policy have been made, such as fresh fruit buyout, specific grades and a list of what actually constitutes a defect.

Crop insurance is an excellent tool to help the grower manage risks. With farming, challenging weather is part of the deal and crop insurance makes the grieving process a little easier. Input costs are so high today, the margin so tight, that a grower could not back--excuse me--a grower could not come back from a loss suffered like my parents without crop insurance.

Last, most importantly, I would like to discuss labor. Clinton County, which is where Sullivan Orchards is located, has more cows than people. The youngest full-time employee at Sullivan Orchards is 35 and he's sitting here before you today. The next youngest employee is 58.

The younger generation is not coming to work in agriculture in Peru. Due to our climate, soils, and I like to believe, skills, the Champlain Valley is known for growing the highest quality McIntosh apples, and I see many of you eating them today.

The Champlain Valley harvest is approximately 1 million bushels of Macs in a 4 week window. Unfortunately, there is not a local work force to harvest a crop. As a result, our farm and all the apple growers in the region have relied on the Jamaican H-2A Program.

For approximately 30 years, the program has worked for

Sullivan Orchards. We have the same men returning year after year. Last year marked the 25th season for James Hahn who was the last of the original men.

Since I returned to the farm, and even prior to that time, there has been constant rhetoric about the need for an efficient Guest Worker Program. We are no closer now than we were 10 years ago. Instead, we are threatening people with E-Verify, scaring growers using the only legal Guest Worker Program, and are taking away health insurance from our Jamaican guest workers.

The subject of immigration reform has been talked to death. I understand it is an election year, and I understand that unemployment is high. I understand that immigration is a very sensitive issue. Unfortunately, myself and the other growers in the Champlain Valley don't have an alternative way to get the crop grown and harvested.

We need an effective Guest Worker Program. I depend upon the men coming year after year. They plant the trees. They operate the tractors. They mow the orchard floor. They know the fields. They go to the local church. They purchase groceries at the local Grand Union. They buy clothes at the local store. They pay Federal and state taxes. They are as much a part of the success of Sullivan Orchards as I am, my father is, or Gramp was.

The time for rhetoric is over and action needs to be taken concerning a Guest Worker Program. Let's get an effective Guest Worker Program passed for 2012 for all commodities, including dairy.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I will be happy to answer any questions, and enjoy those Macs.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sullivan follows:]

Prepared Statement of Adam F. Sullivan, Apple Producer; Orchard Foreman, Sullivan Orchards, Inc., Peru, NY

Good morning, Chairman Lucas, Ranking Member Peterson, and distinguished Members of the Committee. I would also like to recognize Congressmen Bill Owens and Chris Gibson and thank you both on behalf of the industry. It is great to have two New Yorkers on this important Committee and we look forward to working with both of you on the new farm bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the impact of the 2008 Farm Bill and priorities for the 2012 legislation. My name is Adam Sullivan of Sullivan Orchards and I am a 4th generation apple grower from Peru, New York. My Great Grand-father started the farm with a handful of cows, some apple trees, a few vegetables and potatoes--a good Irishmen. When "Gramp" took over, he sold all the cows to grow strictly apples, which is how the farm remains today. My father and mother are still the primary stakeholders and participate in much of the functions of the orchard. I returned to the orchard in 2003 to serve as the orchard foreman and run the day to day activities.

From New York to Washington State and Michigan to California the industry is comprised of independent business owners, many of whom are third or fourth generation. We strongly support programs that build long-term competitiveness, drive innovation and grow demand of our products. Apple growers and the produce industry are not seeking a government farm program to support grower income or market prices. That would not be in the best interest of my business or our industry. The 2008 Farm Bill made a number of important strides toward each of these goals.

Research

Research and extension activities supported by USDA provide the apple industry with a competitive edge by enabling the introduction of new cultivars, implementation of improved pest management strategies, genomics and plant breeding and science-based improvement of food safety.

One of the most successful programs of the 2008 Farm Bill is the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI), which provides funding for a variety of research programs throughout the specialty crop industry. For apple growers, this program played a critical role in slowing down the damage caused by the newly invasive Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (BMSB).

The SCRI funded a 3 year, \$5.7 million research grant involving over 50 scientists and ten research institutions nationwide to develop methods to control this destructive pest. The research has already yielded significant benefits. Information provided to growers from SCRI researchers resulted in a dramatic reduction in losses in 2011. U.S.Apple estimates that information from SCRI researchers saved apple growers alone at least \$35 million in 2011--that is over six times the amount of the total 3 year grant. Much more research needs to be done to develop a long term solution to the BMSB problem, but this research

project alone promises to save agriculture from potentially billions of dollars of losses nationwide.

This is only one example of the impressive return on investment that the SCRI has provided during its first 4 years. Advances made in SCRI research projects on mapping the apple genome, mechanizing orchard practices such as pruning and harvesting, and prevention of other disease and insect pest threats promises to result in even greater savings to agriculture that translates into a direct benefit to the U.S. economy and U.S. jobs.

Another important program is the National Clean Plant Network, which serves as the single nationally-certified source of plant material free of potentially devastating diseases and pests. Enabling the nursery industry to produce clean plants is of critical importance because a number of serious diseases can enter into the United States through nursery stock. Once such pests and diseases become established in a region it is very difficult to eradicate them.

A strong commitment to research is critical to the future of the apple industry, but the benefits of a strong and coordinated research program flow directly into the U.S. economy.

Crop Insurance

The apple industry is one of a handful of specialty crops that participates in the Federal Crop Insurance Program. Over the years, the industry has worked closely with USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) and as a result, significant improvements to the apple policy have been made. USApple and the RMA collaborated to provide growers with an insurance program that better addresses the unique needs of the industry. Just this past season, Hurricane Irene came for a visit. The storm damaged our fresh fruit production through hail stones piercing the fruit and wind knocking apples into each other causing bruises. Nine inches of rain fell with 50 mph wind gusts blowing trees over. Through having the Fresh option with our crop insurance policy, Sullivan Orchards is able to recoup some of our loss.

No crop insurance program will make a grower devastated by a natural disaster financially "whole," but it will allow them to survive a devastating loss and continue to support the economic engine of rural America. Let me be clear, crop insurance enables me to manage risk, but it should never be designed in a way that distorts the market or encourages sub-par production. The apple industry is also concerned that as discussions in Washington, D.C. have moved to further expand crop insurance programs, there will be additional requirements attached, such as cross compliance with other Federal programs. What we need is less government regulation, not more.

Tree Assistance Program

When severe weather occurs, apple growers can experience not only lost crops, but damaged or destroyed trees. That is exactly what happened in 2004 when a January thaw of December's heavy snow fall, followed by 30 below zero temperatures, caused moisture in the ground to freeze and snap roots of more than 30,000 trees in Clinton County.

The replacement cost alone for those trees, was estimated at nearly \$3 million, and when you add the lost crop revenue, the total loss is much greater. This was also a multi-year loss, as new trees take 3 to 5 years to produce fruit. The Tree Assistance Program (TAP) offered a lifeline by providing funds to growers to partially offset the cost of tree replacement. However, securing those funds was a tough lift and it was only because there was a large disaster bill already moving through Congress that TAP funds were allocated.

That is why the apple industry urged Congress to include mandatory funding for TAP in the 2008 Farm Bill. This program is a success and must be maintained and expanded if possible to reach more growers.

Export Programs

Exports are extremely important to the apple industry, with nearly 30% of the fresh crop destined for overseas markets. While our company only exports a small portion of our crop, a strong export market strengthens domestic prices for growers nationwide. For many growers in New York, the export market represents a significant portion of their business.

The apple industry strongly supports the Market Access Program (MAP), which has helped level the playing field as we compete with countries such as China and Chile that have a much lower cost of production.

As a direct result of the MAP program funding, New York companies have been able to identify and supply key importers in Singapore--who are looking for new products for their stores and for the past three seasons they have been stocking apples from New York State. Growers and shippers from New York would not be able to conduct activities or develop a market such as this without the support of MAP funds that allowed us to bring buyers to the U.S. to meet with suppliers. MAP also funded sampling programs in supermarkets to educate consumers in Singapore about apples and their unique flavors. MAP is a public-private partnership, with growers contributing \$2 for every Federal

dollar the industry receives.

The Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) is another important farm bill program which provides funds to resolve phytosanitary and technical barriers that prohibit or threaten access to a foreign market. The New York apple industry used TASC funds to maintain an important foot-hold in the Israeli market when pest and disease concerns threatened to shut down the market. The U.S. Apple Export Council worked with Cornell University to develop new pest mitigation guidelines which allowed trade to continue without interruption.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Congressman Owens for introducing H.R. 3914 to amend the Apple Export Act. This bill would eliminate the USDA inspection requirement for bulk apples into Canada. The requirement, which dates back to 1933, is no longer necessary or required by the Canadians. If passed, this bill will save money and time for the grower and, in the process, increase exports.

Nutrition Programs

Programs like the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program are a win-win for the apple industry and the children that are served. This highly successful national program reaches more than four million low-income elementary school children, many of them in New York City. Apples have consistently been one of the most popular fruits in the program.

The program is popular with parents, students and educators alike. Many of the students who participate take what they learn home with them by asking their parents to buy fresh fruits and vegetables. There is a bipartisan focus on reducing the rate of childhood obesity and diabetes through improved nutrition and this program accomplishes those goals.

Marketing Programs

The 2008 Farm Bill includes a number of important marketing programs which have proven beneficial to the apple industry both in New York and nationally. The Specialty Crop Block Grant program focuses on regional and local priorities to improve the competitiveness of specialty crop producers. Nationally, the apple industry has utilized these grants for food safety programs as well as marketing initiatives and state programs including "Pride of New York."

The Value-Added Grant program is also helping growers here in the north country. Red Jacket Orchards, which is located in Geneva, received such a grant which they used to expand their operation and create new jobs in the process.

Labor--Our #1 Issue

I would be remiss if I did not raise the issue of agricultural labor and the concerns that apple growers have from coast-to-coast as to whether they will have adequate labor to pick the crop. In other parts of the country you hear a lot about migrant workers but we here in the Champlain Valley are a little different.

Clinton County has more cows than people. The youngest full time employee at Sullivan Orchards is 35 and he is sitting before you today. The next youngest employee is 58. The younger generation is not coming to work in agriculture in Peru.

Due to our climate, soils, and I like to believe skills, the Champlain Valley is known for growing the highest quality McIntosh apples. Unfortunately, the harvest window for McIntosh lasts only 4 weeks. The Champlain Valley harvests approximately 1 million bushels in this 4 week window. As stated earlier, there is not a local work force to harvest the crop. Most migrant workers do not want to travel to this area because of the short work period.

As a result, our farm and most all of the apple growers in this part of New York have relied on the Jamaican H-2A program. It is not uncommon to have the same workers return for 10 or even 20 years. The program, while expensive and bureaucratic, has supplied us a reliable and consistent workforce and up until about 2 years ago it worked pretty well.

In August of 2010, just as we were gearing up for harvest, the program came to a standstill and workers were delayed in arriving because the U.S. Government began questioning the legitimacy of voluntary fees which had always been paid by the workers to the Jamaican Central Labor Organization (JCLC) to pay for health insurance, and liaison services provided by the JCLC to the workers. The JCLC also coordinated a program for workers to send money home at no charge if they chose. The JCLC is affiliated with the Jamaican Government and the program and voluntary fees had been in place since the 1990s. When the Department of Labor began questioning these services and specifically the fees, we almost lost our workers. Finally, due to the intervention of a number of senior Members of Congress, an agreement was reached that no fees would be taken out and the workers arrived.

This "compromise" is still in effect and we are now getting our workers on time. However, they are coming without health insurance and if they want to send money home, they have to pay exorbitant fees through Western Union. I have had workers come to me and express

concern that they no longer have health insurance. They don't understand--and neither do I--why our government would take that right away from them.

Though the program is mostly working again, I have strong concerns about what will happen if mandatory E-Verify legislation is passed without agricultural labor reforms and suddenly all of agriculture is forced into the H-2A program at once. Currently, the program only supplies about 50,000 of the estimated one million agriculture workers needed in this country. Sullivan Orchards has been in this program for over 30 years, and I can tell you first hand that it does not have the capacity to double let alone increase twenty-fold without major reforms. What the industry needs is a stable, adequate, able and predictable supply of agricultural labor able to participate legally in the U.S. workforce.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify before this Committee. These discussions and the reauthorization of the farm bill offer an exciting opportunity to further improve important specialty crop programs and support increased growth and competitiveness of the apple industry.

The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Sullivan.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

Your memories of going to the field after the catastrophe reminds me of being a 7 year old and following my father to the wheat field nearest the house one night and watching him stand in that field with his flashlight and realizing every stalk was broken over and that quiet walk back. Even as a 7 year old, like yourself, there are some things you remember forever. The fact that he said nothing for 2 days made a great impression on me. That said, that's what we're here about, and that's what we're here to try to address.

Mr. Eckhardt, let's begin with you. You mentioned the SURE Program and you talked about your experiences. Could you expand on that just a little bit, and not only your experience with SURE, but expand for a bit on where you think the money would be better spent, perhaps you think the money would be better spent somewhere else?

Mr. Eckhardt. Right. I think as we look at eligibility for coverage under certain programs, the paperwork and record keeping trail, along with whether or not SURE will be released, is just so burdensome that many people back away from any insurance coverage whatsoever. I mean, it may be that the only reason they sign up for CAT for their field crops or for NAP for their vegetable crops is that their banker may require that they have some type of coverage.

But when it gets right down to push come to shove, for instance, with NAP, the first 50 percent of your loss is yours. You take it in the shorts for 50. If you have 51 percent loss, you will get indemnification for one percent. Do you understand what I'm saying?

So when you look at the calculations, and SURE Program has some of the same issues, only it's usually 2 years later that those funds start to become available, and through the process of qualification and the review by the county committees and the FSA county and state committees, that you get some indemnification through the SURE Program.

My seed company really is looking to get paid that year for the seed I bought from them, not 2 years later. My fertilizer company wants their money sometimes up front. When we look at these kind of indemnification programs that are that long in getting funds back to those people who have had losses, sometimes catastrophic losses, it just isn't working.

You know, what could we spend it better on? Perhaps on some type of process or policy NAP process, that would allow the grower to purchase a higher level of coverage. Much like we have in the crop insurance programs. NAP would, for lack of a better term, I call it NAP Plus. But these would be things that we could tweak to this program to make it so that it's more acceptable.

And the other thing is, is it's very difficult when you try to put together what is referred to as APH, actual production history, for your farm. You know, you produce potatoes or sweet corn or whatever, you have to come up with documentation year after year to justify that.

So it's--it's extremely difficult and time consuming for the producer and those people in the FSA and the crop insurance people to come up with speciality crop insurance that's going to work. SURE has it. It just is too time consuming and too late.

The Chairman. Switching gears for a moment, gentlemen. I'd

be honest, if I did not admit this to you, I would not be honest. The northwest half of the great State of Oklahoma is what I represent. And when I stand up in front of this building, I can see more trees than there are in my entire Congressional district, so understand I think they're amazing things, these trees.

Could you tell me for a moment about your experiences with the Tree Assistance Program, TAP, if anyone has experience?

And by the way, I like trees. I'm not opposed to trees. I just don't have any.

Mr. Sullivan. I think it was 2003 or 2004. Don't hold--hold me to the actual year it happened. We had an extensive snowfall in December and then we had a wonderful January thaw, which was nice. I mean, it went from 20 below up to into the nice 30 and 40. It was a nice, nice, nice little break. But then January decided to come back with full vengeance and froze up the ground, which in turn snapped the roots and killed the trees.

So in the Champlain Valley, we had close to 30,000 trees that--that snapped off at--in the root system and the trees had to be removed and replaced. And so we did the Tree Assistance Program. It helped. It assisted, and I mean, it didn't pay for the loss by no means, but I mean it was extra money that was certainly needed and it was nice.

The Chairman. This, of course, is one of the many reasons we have these hearings. I come from an area where this is not really utilized, but obviously it is an important program.

Mr. Sullivan. It has its place, of course--I didn't get into it in my speech, and I'm glad to hear that we're really trying to be financially and fiscal responsible. All these policies are great to have and regulations are great and the Tree Assistance Program is great. But the \$30,000 that we got from putting--from the Tree Assistance Program, it was nice. It helped. I'm not going to say no, because it's there.

But if it wasn't there, I am still going to be farming. I mean, call me thick-headed and dumb, I mean, but I'm still going to make a go of it. That I think it's more important as you're doing the farm bill that you look and you say is it worth putting my kids and everybody else's kids here further in debt for giving a little Band-Aid aid or is it better that maybe we don't put the money out there.

The Chairman. Your insights are very appreciated. My time has expired. I now recognize the gentleman from Georgia for 5 minutes. Mr. Scott.

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Seems to me that the two most pronounced areas of great challenge to the specialty crop industry here is the need for crop insurance because no area of agriculture is more susceptible to storms and weather conditions than specialty crops. And the other one is your challenge with labor because it's labor intensive. It's getting out there, picking and harvesting these crops. So let me start off with the crop insurance.

Mr. Eckhardt, I think you probably hit some of this: How many lenders now require crop insurance, and would this be the way to go, that lenders require the growers to have insurance if they lend them money for their operating cost?

Mr. Eckhardt. I don't think I've ever been told by a lender that I was not going to get a loan if I didn't have crop insurance.

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. Okay.

Mr. Eckhardt. But you can tell by body language and interest rate just how important they make that: It would be a great idea, Mr. Eckhardt, to have some crop insurance. And you're nodding your head like this, going, yes, you're absolutely right.

So to say that in some writing some place, crop insurance was required by my lender, I don't think I've ever seen that. And if it is, what the big print giveth, the little print taketh away. But I still think that as we go forward, it certainly gives them the option to say this person has some coverage should there be a catastrophic loss and we might actually ask to be named as one of the people who receive those funds.

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. Do you think that with us in Washington, in Congress, as we develop policy, that some kind of way that we approach with this farm bill some effort to require that?

Mr. Eckhardt. Well, perhaps--perhaps through a--if it was

required by a lender, the farm bill could look at how there might be a reduced interest rate to that grower who's borrowing operating or capital funds, a reduced interest rate if you do have some type of workable crop insurance. But it needs to be something that's actually going to pay you something if you have a loss.

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. Right. All right. Now let's turn to the labor issue, because, Mr. Sullivan, I really think that you hit the nail on the head here with this. Because we can no longer continue to hide from this issue. If we do not address the labor issue for specialty crops, how devastating would this be? I mean, we've another Farm--we got this farm bill. I mean, there may be some things we could do with this, I don't know. We certainly can bring that discussion up, but this farm bill comes around every 4 years. How urgent is this problem to develop a Guest Worker Program for specialty crop producers?

Mr. Sullivan. I think Mr. Child has probably a pretty good example on how urgent the, if you don't mind telling your experience with--a couple of years ago, about the H-2A Program and how our government decided to take it upon themselves to invoke rules that nobody knew about to not allow the men to get in here.

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. I did want to get to that because, Mr. Child, I was getting to you next. And as you respond to this, you said securing the borders, and that was the only reference that you made in your testimony to what might be judged upon as dealing with this immigration issue. I want to ask you that, but I also wanted to ask you which borders? Are you talking about Canadian border?

Mr. Child. I do live near a high priority enforcement zone on the Canadian border, but I fully recognize most of the people that are coming into the country to work are coming in on the southern borders. The fact that I live so close to the border, with a border patrol station in my town, just makes me very vulnerable to enforcement.

I think it was back in 2004 was the last year that I hired crews from labor contractors that were green-carded people. It's a pretty well known fact that approximately 70 percent of the migrant workers in agriculture are probably here with forged documents. And we might as well bring out the facts and tell it straight.

I currently use the H-2A Program which Mr. Sullivan alluded to that he uses--for his Jamaican work force. I still hire Mexican workers for my vegetable farm.

The H-2A Program has allowed me to have a continuity from one year to the next without concerns about enforcement from Immigration, but the Administration, through the Department of Labor, has been quite difficult. There are a lot of hoops to jump through.

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. Right?

Mr. Child. It's been really frustrating the last couple of years, where the rule changes from one year to the next, make it quite difficult, and---

Mr. David Scott of Georgia. Let me just--I know my time is getting around the Chairman's back. I don't want him to cut me off. But may I make one suggestion that might be helpful, is that you get these specialty crop block grants coming down through your state, and you also--we also have Specialty Crop Research Initiative, and you have some excellent universities and research groups here. It might be useful to do some documentation, engage in some study of this impact of the labor issue with the specialty crops in this region. And it could qualify for that, to begin to give us in Washington more substantive information and credibility on how we move forward with this, because, I assure you, I grew up on a farm. I used to come up. Matter of fact, I used to come up here a long time ago when I was a kid, in around Utica. And they used to have a lot of bean picking up there then. I don't know if they still do. And even back then, it was migrant labor coming up from the south, and they used to have what they called bean camps up here.

So you're very unique in this regard, and it could be a wise utilization of your block grants to get some information on this. Thank you, sir.

The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Virginia for 5 minutes.

Mr. Goodlatte. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to follow up on the questions of the gentleman from Georgia, again, on the issue of the H-2A Program and Guest

Worker Programs in general.

I have, in the last few Congresses, introduced legislation to reform the H-2A Program to change the adverse effect wage rate, which seems like a bureaucrat's dream, to the prevailing wage rate which it seems like most businesses pay their workers based upon what the prevailing wage is in--in the marketplace. It also would reform a number of these other issues.

Unfortunately, it's also not something that will come up in the farm bill because it's the Judiciary Committee's jurisdiction. But since I am a Member of the Judiciary Committee, I can be helpful in that regard, and I would love to hear some of the particular problems that you had here in the last 2 years with the H-2A Program.

One example that I've heard, from my apple growers in the Shenandoah Valley, has been that they have no ability to determine whether or not the worker can actually do the work of climbing a ladder and picking apples. In fact, when they attempted to determine that the people they were going to be hiring would indeed climb a ladder, they were told that they were imposing a requirement that was inappropriate.

This kind of problem really makes a program which was struggling to begin with, the H-2A Program, even more unworkable and why I think it needs to be reformed. But Mr. Child, Mr. Sullivan, any of you want to jump in and talk about the experience you've had lately in dealing with the workers you need under the H-2A Program?

Mr. Child. Yes, there are a few hurdles that have come up in the last couple years. A lot of times with this program we're being regulated by multiple agencies, both at the Federal and state level. In the past, the H-2A Program required a certain--required that the producer provide housing for the workers, but left the inspection of the housing up to the state departments of health.

That changed a couple years ago where, then before you could receive certification, the inspection of the housing had to be done at that time. Since you have to apply so far ahead before your date of need for the workers, that meant going out in the snow banks and working on the labor camp just to get certification rather than having the facilities ready when the workers arrived, and that's been a bit of a hardship.

I have heard horror stories. Some of my colleagues in Idaho have had some very bad issues along those lines, where for very minor, not even what you would normally consider infractions, they're denied a housing permit. And then that backs up the whole process and you have to start all over again.

Some of the regulations may have good intent, but the way they're administered is really off base.

Mr. Goodlatte. Agreed. Let me, since I'm going to be limited in time here.

Mr. Child. Okay.

Mr. Goodlatte. Let me shift over to another topic I'd like to raise that we haven't had a lot of discussion about, and that's the conservation programs. And I'll give Mr. Eckhardt and Mr. Osborn an opportunity to tell us about which of those programs producers in this part of the world take part in and what conservation programs we should focus on with the limited resources we have.

Mr. Osborn. I just want to add something just from the last on the H-2A, and that is for a small producer like me, H-2A doesn't work. It's too expensive and when I need three employees for 1 week and then a month and a half later I need ten, the H-2A doesn't fit. And there are a lot of small grape growers and specialty crop producers that H-2A just doesn't work, so there's nothing there for us to get the extra help that we need.

In terms of conservation, we've worked with the Soil and Water. We've got our drainage ditches put in. Those are all very effective. The Cooperative Extension and their help in bringing and letting us know what is available to us in terms of education and the programs like mulching and things like that that help our conservation are all very effective. I mean, I appreciate everything that's being done.

Mr. Eckhardt. The EQIP Program is critically important, but it also has a component that the producer contributes. There are other matching funds that might be available from state or local municipalities, so that when you look at the funding for EQIP, as we tweak the program to make it work better, especially in the specialty crops, I think there are lots of opportunity to leverage other programs to fund that.

I think the critical part is, is we are all

conservationists at heart. We want to have something left for our children and our grandchildren to farm. But if we don't have these critical programs and practices in place, in some cases there may not be much left, and the environment is important to us.

Mr. Goodlatte. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from New York, Mr. Owens for 5 minutes.

Mr. Owens. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for testifying today.

It seems to me that the two issues we're hearing most about are crop insurance and farm labor issues. I know that certainly with Mr. Sullivan we've had many, many conversations about this as it goes, and some cases go back to your father in the 1980s, when we were having those same discussions.

In terms of the crop insurance issue, is there some analysis, that you've seen that's out there, that would give us a good road map to establishing a workable crop insurance program? Obviously understanding it may have to be modified regionally, and may also have to be modified in terms of the type of agricultural program we're facing. It just strikes me that we've had a lot of conversation about it, but when you look at the crop insurance programs, it's not clear to me that there is in fact an analysis that we could utilize to really, in a major way, revamp these programs to make them more functional.

Mr. Eckhardt. You're asking for a template that we can apply across the board, with specialty crops, with field crops like corn, soybeans, wheat, cotton. I think it's going to be a group effort to come up with a--we have a base, and I look at that base as being, like the NAP Program, for those programs that do not have any insurance, and the possibility of having more crops added to the insured programs rather than relying on NAP. But as a template, I think it's going to have to come down to a consensus among specialty crop growers, region by region, what works. And I think that looking at some of the things that don't work and tweaking them to get them so they do work.

I wish I could say I had a template, and be able to hand it to the Committee and say, here, this will work. This is my idea as how it's going to work. I have some ideas, but it is not a template, but it is some ideas on how we can tweak it and make it work better. It's very difficult because there are so many thousand of specialty crops that we would have to include in something like that.

Mr. Owens. Well, let's start with the ideas that you do have, and let's lay them out and then get some analysis done to determine whether or not that works.

One of the things that struck me in your testimony, when you talked about and having read about this before, is if you have a 51 percent loss but you have, in effect, a deductible of 50 percent and you're getting paid one percent, it hardly makes sense, I would think in most cases, to buy the insurance.

Mr. Eckhardt. That's correct. And I think when you look at specialty crop growers and NAP insurance in general, whether it be for a hay crop for dairy farmers, I mean, if you wanted NAP insurance on your hay in 2012, you're already too late, because you had to sign up by the 30th of September in 2011 to have that crop insured.

To me, the first step is changing sign up dates. I mean, just like Ralph said, to be able to look at the market situation just prior to planting or planning to plant and say okay, this crop, that crop, going to dropped, but you had to buy it or at least sign up for the insurance 6 months ago, kind of odd.

But also, what I would refer to as NAP Plus, where you would actually, as an individual grower, choose to buy additional insurance, maybe insure it to 65 percent, so you had a 35 percent loss, and then you would have indemnification kick in, you know. It's \$250 per crop, per county, up to a maximum of three crops. Okay, let's move it to a situation where you would pay \$500 or maybe a thousand, and you, as an individual, would be able to choose that based on your need for protection.

Mr. Owens. Thanks. Want to move to the labor issue for just a minute. I'm curious, from all of the panelists, whether or not they would support a program that would provide for the allowance of individuals currently in the country, potentially illegally in the country, to obtain a work visa? Is that something that the farm community would support?

Mr. Eckhardt. Oh, yes. I mean, for us it would be a--I don't have any migrant workers right now. My work force is

almost entirely locals and especially teenagers.

You know, we're just holding our breath on how we're going to farm in 2012 if I can't hire my teenagers. First of all, we're one of the few employment opportunities for them. But the biggest concern for us always is the fact that they're in school until the end of June. They go back to school at the end of August or early September, and what do I do to get crops planted and what do I do in the fall to finish the harvest?

And having some--a few people available just for that short period of time would be extremely helpful. Just like the H-2A doesn't work. I mean, we need something that will work, and I think anything you can do to help us with that.

Mr. Owens. Mr. Child, looks like you have a comment.

Mr. Child. Yes, yes, I would like--I would like to speak in favor of that type of movement. I'm not talking about a fast track to citizenship. Most of these people do not care to become citizens of the U.S., or if they do, that option could be there. But I don't think it should be fast tracked. It's not what the workers are interested in, nor is it politically going to happen.

But we do have a trained work force in the country, and to start all over with new workers just to have a legal status would also be burdensome. I think there should be a provision to give these people that are currently here, illegally or not, the opportunity to stay and work in the country. They are doing the jobs that most Americans choose not to do.

Mr. Owens. I'd like to go back to Mr. Ooms' statement, we either import labor or we import food. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Osborn. Just a quick---

The Chairman. The gentlemen, may finish. Yes, please.

Mr. Osborn. Quick comment on that. One, the government doesn't have the infrastructure to do the paperwork for a new work force, if you kicked everybody out. So to have the ability to get legal working papers for people who are already in the country, who are already working would be an excellent thing to have.

Mr. Owens. Thank you very much.

The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired. The chair now turns to the gentleman from Texas, which should be noted for the record, are amazed when they see the number of trees we have in Oklahoma in the third district. Mr. Conaway is recognized for 5 minutes. And a response before his 5 minutes begins.

Mr. Conaway. Exactly. I actually--I gave the previous Chairman, Mr. Goodlatte, a picture of myself standing by the city limits signs of the city of No Trees, Texas, so in addition to snow this morning, there are even trees in it as well.

Mr. Sullivan, I couldn't help but notice the name Isabella on, or Isabel, on your pink and white tote that you brought in, and much--and then your comments about the debt that we're laying on them and the struggles that we have across this entire country as to how we hand off the legacy, of the American legacy, to her--I'm assuming it's your daughter--to my grandchildren. I have seven grandkids, that legacy of debt that we are on the path to do that.

I offered up the last farm bill, 2008, an amendment in Committee that would have said if you only get--if your check, your maximum check, that you get from the non-crop insurance portion of the support system is \$100 or less, that you wouldn't get it. That the payments would have to be more than \$100 or we wouldn't pay you.

And we had a pitched battle in the Committee how cruel that was for me to argue that, that \$100 was the difference between making it and breaking it on a farm. And in your comment, that the \$30,000 for the Tree Assistance Program, while helpful, had you not had it you would still be growing apples today.

And as we look at these programs, we need to focus on which ones--because we can't afford them all, what are those that are really the make/break kinds of issues involved. We fought them all the way down to \$25 a check, so that, if the check is less than \$25, which it costs USDA \$30 to write each check, you don't get it.

We stripped about \$6 billion out of the Crop Insurance Program over the last couple of years. And I want to know if any of you have seen an impact on the private delivery system, that I think most of us support, where you've got private folks selling the insurance, doing the adjustments and working with you on those programs. Have you seen an impact yet from that

reduction of some \$6 billion from the crop insurance side?

Mr. Osborn. I would just like to talk about the paperwork. Doing the--the grape--insuring grapes is, and I don't know about other crops, but when my insurance agent comes to talk to me about the crop insurance, he--he says what level do you want? Do you want 95 percent, 90s all the way down to 60, 50 percent? And then I say, well, what's it going to cost? He goes, well, I don't really know because RMA hasn't really told us yet. I have a good idea.

I mean, 5 years ago, they had no knowledge. Now they sort of have an idea, and they'll get up a quote and they'll say, here's your quote. And I'll say, okay, I'll take the 75 percent, that one.

Well, then that goes to RMA, and then they come back and say this is the price. And I only get one shot on that. If I don't like the price, then I--I don't get insured, or I have to take it. The insurance agents not having a clear picture of what the cost of that insurance is going to be is problematic.

Mr. Sullivan. We're pleased with the Crop Insurance Program. USApple worked with RMA and the crop insurance providers to work to improve the apple policy. You will have some apple growers who say they're not happy with it, of course, and there's minor glitches in the system. But I mean, overall, it's a very functional program.

As for how you save \$6 billion---

Mr. Conaway. No, no. We've already done that. I'm just saying what impact has that had? Have you seen the impact?

Mr. Sullivan. Well, no, I have absolutely no idea. I did--people in Kansas City at the RMA office are a great group of individuals. I worked with them and just appreciate the hard work that they do at that office. And they're really working very, very hard for the growing community.

It may not seem that way, and you've got a lot of actuarial people in there who can do circles with numbers in there. But I mean, it's a good group. And I think as you're doing the Crop Insurance Program, you've got to get their insight in it. I mean, they've got oodles of experience.

I mean, I want to tell you, yes, we need to be--color of the apples, I'm going to tell you that's a green apple versus a red apple, and we need to get some of the loss end of it. But when it comes to the number ends of it and how stuff is going to work on the actuarial thing, you really need to get RMA's involvement in there.

Mr. Conaway. Mr. Eckhardt?

Mr. Eckhardt. In delivery, I think that the private insurance company people have done a reasonably good job, even with some of the cuts that we've seen. I still say that our biggest issue is the fact that we have--if it's apples, an apple--have we got apples or we have grapes.

But when you come to a diversified farm like my own, where we may have close to 30 crops or those people who are growing nontraditional crops like hops or, here in the Northeast, arugula or Belgian endive or the list just starts--goes from A to Z, arugula to zucchini, if you want to call it that.

It's just one of the issues that perhaps the best people that have the best knowledge of the crops grown in that area is the FSA County Committee, and their input, and growers' input into what is a good yield, what's a good price, how can we insure this crop, would probably be best, a good way is spend some time with those people.

Mr. Conaway. Thank you. Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired. The chair now turns to the gentlelady from Maine, Ms. Pingree, for 5 minutes.

Ms. Pingree. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you again to another wonderful panel for your articulate thoughts. I do want to take a quick aside here so this doesn't get lost, is follow-up on one of the dairy things.

I didn't know before that Representative Gibson had entered into a cow milking contest, and I just want to challenge him here in his home district. I do have a blue ribbon and a red ribbon from a politician's cow milking contest and would ask if we can have a little match-up.

The Chairman. The gauntlet is thrown down.

Ms. Pingree. Exactly. Maine against New York.

But thank you very much. As I said, I mentioned earlier that one of my interests on the aspects of local food and local production in the growing market there, but I also support all of my colleagues' questions on crop insurance.

In the bill that I submitted, we asked the USDA to analyze

this problem, because I do think there are a lot of good ideas and data out there. There are good thoughts from actuaries, farmers themselves, and I do think having a whole farm crop insurance program--Mr. Eckhardt, you've had a lot of good ideas for us today--but it would be very beneficial to many of the farmers that I represent. And I think we could resolve this issue with a little bit of resources put behind it and then provide something that would really be useful to many of the farms and the farms that are actually growing today.

I also represent a lot of organic growers and as many of you in the room know, organic growers have to pay a premium, but then a reduced price when they recover anything from crop insurance, which is completely backwards and upside down. So I think there's an opportunity there, particularly, again, with this being a fast-growing market and a lot of investment being made in organic production today.

So just to the panel generally, and any of you who have thoughts on this, as I mentioned, I'm interested in how we spend our resources on programs that allow you to expand in the local food market, to use more CSA, farmers' markets.

Many of you have already talked about some of the areas where you're benefiting or using some of the programs that are out there. One thing I'm interested in is that there are about 2,000 Farm-to-School Programs around the country that are providing more local foods for schools, also universities and hospitals. That's a great market and a local market.

And I know there are some barriers there, and so I'm interested in that, but also just any of your input on these particular programs and where we should be directing our resources. I'll just open it up to any of you.

Mr. Osborn. I'm a big proponent of local, just to talk a little bit about marketing, marketing to the American consumer, that buying local is important, not only from knowing where their food is coming from, but what the impact is.

For every bottle of wine that you buy local, you return \$10.60--or \$10.05 to the local community. When you buy a wine from another country, you return 67 cents. So the impact of buying local is huge, and I don't think the American public really understands that, and I think that's probably the most important thing we need to do.

The other is people have to understand the difference in cost. I had a Chilean grape grower in visiting last year, and he said to me, said, Scott, how much do you pay your vineyard help? And I said, well, I give them \$10, \$12 an hour plus medical benefits. And he sat there and looked at me, and he goes, wow, I pay mine, \$8 a day.

I can't compete with \$8 a day. And I think the American public needs to understand that everybody needs a good living and we just can't compete with these people, and they shouldn't buy their products that are basically exploiting the workers.

Ms. Pingree. Thank you for that. And I do think it helps to emphasize that this is a--this is a jobs issue, and especially in many of our local communities and certainly an economic benefit, so thank you for that. Go ahead.

Mr. Child. One comment on encouraging local marketing: The State Specialty Crop Block Grants are a good avenue for that.

In New York State, over the past few years, approximately 20 percent of that block grant money has gone into marketing and promotion, much of which is on a, probably, a local type scale. It also has helped fund improvements at the Hunts Point Terminal market in New York City for those producers that choose to market there. So that is one approach that the Federal Government can help on that line.

Mr. Eckhardt. And the research for the nutrition portion of it, especially when we talk about School Lunch Program, as we try to get more local products into our schools, collaborating with people so that we can use products. An apple is an apple from--if your school is right here locally and you produce apples locally, they should be able to use those local apples.

The Vegetable Growers Association, along with several other groups, are trying to make cookies that go into School Lunch Programs. How do you make butternut squash into a really good nutritious cookie that kids want to eat? Like, you put chocolate chips in it.

But the idea is that we try to come to these research things to help with School Lunch Programs and what makes children want to eat nutritious things. They have to taste good, they have to look good, they have to be good for them.

Ms. Pingree. Okay. Thank you. I'm out of time, but thank you very much.

The Chairman. The gentlelady's time has expired. We now turn for the final 5 minutes allotment to the gentleman from New York, Mr. Gibson.

Mr. Gibson. Well, thanks, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the panel.

It's just been very detailed, a productive testimony. I also want to take the opportunity on behalf of my colleague, Bill Owens, to thank our hosts here today, that the North Country Community College, very proud of this institution. Indeed, number one in the state, 22 in the nation.

A few comments, and then I'll throw out the questions for the panelists. But it's certainly some discussion here this morning about our situation with deficit and debt, and I keenly appreciate what has been communicated this morning.

It's so important, though, that we take a comprehensive approach to this, a thoughtful comprehensive approach, as we go about that very serious question in recognizing the fact that, even in the last 5 years there have already been significant savings in this area. And the fact that when you look at it in total outlays, you're talking $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1 percent of outlays into a sector of our economy that's so vitally important.

Absolutely, we need to scrutinize every single program to make sure we're doing what's right, but we also recognize no farms, no food. We need to get this right or we're going to end up growing food overseas. So certainly appreciate that's not to negate anything that's been said here today, but just that how important it is we get that balance right.

I want to make a few comments. This testimony, I deeply appreciate all that was communicated here.

Disaster relief: we were hit very badly by a storm, including up here in the North Country, in August. And having the Emergency Conservation Program, the Emergency Watershed Program available to us, it took some fight to get that funding there, but it helped us in terms of debris removal, money for fences, for reimbursement there, and cleaning out streams.

And Mr. Chairman, just say that going forward, I think it's important we budget for this because this was a situation we were at zero balance and it took us a couple of months to fight our way to get that money available. As we think about this bill, that we think about paying that forward, in making sure that those programs are available to us.

But we also know that even after that assistance was available, we ran up against this insurance, so no farmer was made whole. And you know, Bill Owens put a marker down that we should pick up and continue to work, and he said, well, what would that template look like?

And I've got here today a couple folks who work on my ag advisory panel who are also part of the New York Farm Bureau, Julie Suarez and Eric Ooms, and I'd ask that we think about is there some way that New York could work on a proposal that may flesh this out in greater detail, that we can get into the national narrative. Something to think about. Certainly, I have no tasking authority over you, but just to say that maybe we can work together on that to provide a recommendation.

The next thing is, Mr. Eckhardt mentioned that NRCS, he was talking about the EQIP Program and that he thought it may be administered in the FSA. Mr. Chairman, that I just want to tell you that I move all about the 137 towns in my district. I do hear that quite often.

I just want to submit it, that I want to reinforce and affiliate myself with the remarks of Mr. Eckhardt. And something to think about, it's really just a common sense approach, and recognize that this is looked at differently in different parts of the country. But here, we like to have our foot soldiers out and working issues, and then the folks who are helping facilitate, those are the ones who are helping with the paperwork. And that's sort of the view here in upstate New York as it relates to how we delineate duties.

I might also say that it might be worth looking at, we're talking about bureaucratic reorganization, that we also consider the labor issue that we've talked about so much. And I know, Mr. Sullivan, we worked with you, you've come down to D.C. I appreciate that. We've worked with Mr. Owens, the New York delegation, as we try to sort through this. I wonder if that program, H-2A, isn't better administered in the USDA instead of the DOL. I think we might have more empathy in trying to solve the problem if it was the same folks who come from the farming community. Something to think about.

I want to affiliate myself with remarks of Mr. Eckhardt in terms of FSA closings. You know, as the guy who was a soldier

for many years, I think we should be looking to the headquarters in D.C. Before we come out here. You know, we have offices that have two people in it, but those two personnel are so vitally important to the farmers all throughout the community. And as we look to consolidate, I would say are there savings first that we can get in the headquarters before we come out to where we're actually providing the services?

Organic was mentioned. I want to say today I had Mike Kilpatrick here. He's about 24 years old. He's an incredible young man, bright future ahead of him. Took a really hard hit in this storm. He represents the future, I think. He's just a representative of the future of organic farming in our area.

We need to support him. And I'd ask Mike Kilpatrick, since we weren't able to get you as a witness here today, if you could provide your recommendations--I'd ask, Mr. Chairman, if we could submit that for the record for consideration.

[The information referred to is located on p. 894.]

Mr. Gibson. And I'm sorry about the lengthy statement, but I did want to make these points. And I just want to ask the panelists for--we haven't gotten on the record yet as far as the energy programs and broadband. These are just other areas where we can try to help the profitability in extending the reach of our agricultural community. I'd ask that--we've had some farmers in our district take advantage of the energy incentives, none of which were in the USDA, somewhere in Treasury, to help with photovoltaic--to help drive down energy costs. I'd ask for any kind of comment from the panelists.

The Chairman. And a prompt answer would be appreciated.

Mr. Osborn. Which kind of answer? A short one?

I think there should be more funds devoted to help either with tax credits or something for alternative energy. You know, at this point in time, I'm considering working out a solar project. I'd like to have the whole farm to be solar. But it's pretty hard to work out the numbers to come up with \$150,000 to put in a solar thing. To wait for tax credits down the road is problematic.

I'm working with a leasing company. If I can get the lease prices down, below what my cost of utility would be, I would do that.

But I just want to address the FSA closings. In Yates County, we're losing our FSA office, and it's going to be tragic. There are a lot of Mennonites in our county and these folks use horse and buggy, and for them to have to now travel 25 to 30 miles in a horse and buggy is really problematic. And we only have two people in the office, and they're very, very effective. And they're very communicative, they stay on top of every farmer, and we know exactly what's going on. And to lose that is going to be tragic in Yates County.

Mr. Eckhardt. Just real quick, probably the most important crop that every farm in this area of the Northeast produces is their children. And without the ability to put these young people in a position of responsibility for working on our farms, whether they're our own kids or our neighbors', we've had three generations of young people that have worked for us: Their grandparents, their parents and now the kids are working for us. And I think as we go forward, if we're going to have anybody take over in agriculture, we've got to have young people involved in agriculture, and we can't exclude them. A 14 year old with a size 15 shoe at 6' 1" is not an infant.

The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired, the panel's time has expired. The chair would like to note that before we adjourn it has been my custom to allow the Members whose district we are in a closing comment. Not all of us are fortunate enough to live in New York State and we are scattering to the airports very shortly. Mr. Owens, 2 minutes, sir.

Mr. Owens. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, again, thank you to all of you for attending today. Thank you to the panelists.

I want to say that from my perspective, I enjoyed listening and learning today. This is very important to all of us to bring back to Washington. I also want to say as we talk much in Washington about buy America, this is the penultimate product to be purchased in America. And Mr. Osborn, your suggestion that we buy America, particularly in the wine area, where you're competing with other countries at a cheaper price, I think we all should take that to heart. We also should focus on that when we're going into Wal-Mart and other places and we're picking up foreign made products.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. The gentleman yields back. I would note to all of our good folks participating in the back of the room today in this hearing, anyone watching or listening, you can visit the House Agricultural Committee's website to learn more about the 2012 Farm Bill. In addition, you may submit comments to be considered a part of the Committee's field hearing record. Your comments must be submitted using the website address by May 20, 2012, and that is <http://agriculture.house.gov/farmbill>. Look it up on our website.

Under the rules of the Committee, the record for today's hearing will remain open for 30 calendar days to receive additional material and supplemental written responses from witnesses to any questions posed by a Member.

This hearing of the Committee on Agriculture is adjourned. [Whereupon, at 11:57 a.m. (EST) the Committee was adjourned.]

THE FUTURE OF U.S. FARM POLICY: FORMULATION OF THE 2012 FARM BILL

FRIDAY, MARCH 23, 2012

House of Representatives,
Committee on Agriculture,
Galesburg, IL.

The Committee met, pursuant to call, at 9:00 a.m. (CDT), in the Gymnasium, Building F, Carl Sandburg College, 2400 Tom L. Wilson Boulevard, Galesburg, Illinois, Hon. Frank D. Lucas [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Members present: Representatives Lucas, Conaway, Hultgren, Schilling, and Boswell.

Staff present: Bart Fischer, Tamara Hinton, John Porter, Matt Schertz, Nicole Scott, Debbie Smith, Pelham Straughn, John Konya, Margaret Wetherald, C. Clark Ogilvie, and Caleb Crosswhite.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. FRANK D. LUCAS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM OKLAHOMA

The Chairman. This hearing of the Committee on Agriculture entitled, The Future of U.S. Farm Policy: Formulation of the 2012 Farm Bill, will come to order.

Good morning and thank you all for joining us today for this farm bill field hearing. And I would like to thank Congressman Schilling for hosting this hearing here in Illinois.

These field hearings are a continuation of what my friend and Ranking Member Collin Peterson started in the spring of 2010. Today, we will build upon the information we gathered in those hearings, as well as 11 farm policy audits we conducted this past summer.

We used those audits as an opportunity to thoroughly evaluate farm programs to identify areas where we could improve efficiency.

The field hearings serve a slightly different purpose though. Today, we are here to listen.

I talk to producers all the time back in Oklahoma. I see them in the feed store and I meet with them at my town hall meetings. And of course I get regular updates from my boss back home on the farm. Yes, that is Linda Lucas. But the conditions and crops in Oklahoma are different than what you will find here in Illinois.

And one of the reasons we hold field hearings is to get a sense of the diversity of agriculture across this great country.

Let me tell you--in some ways, Illinois and my home state of Oklahoma could not be more different. Back home--and I say this respectfully--back home, we do not measure our soil in feet and our rain in inches like you do here. That is called a little bit of envy.

The broad range of agricultural production makes our country strong, and it also creates challenges when you are trying to write a single farm bill to support so many different regions and so many different commodities.

While each sector has unique concerns when it comes to farm policy, I would like to share some of my general goals for the next farm bill.

First and foremost, I want to give producers the tools to help you do what you do best, and that is produce the safest, most abundant, most affordable food supply in the world.

To do this, we must develop a farm bill that works for all regions and all commodities. We have repeatedly heard that a one-size-fits-all program will not work. I can tell you from experience that what works here in Illinois will not work as well for my constituents in Oklahoma. So the commodity title must give producers options so that they can choose the program that works best for them.

I am also committed to providing a strong crop insurance program. The Committee has heard loud and clear about the importance of crop insurance and we believe it is the cornerstone of the safety net. Today, we hope to hear how we can improve crop insurance.

And last, we will work to ensure that producers can continue using conservation programs to protect our natural resources. I am interested to hear how producers in this area of the country use the conservation programs. I am particularly curious as to your thoughts on how to simplify the process so they are easier for farmers and ranchers to use.

Beyond those priorities, I know there are a number of universal concerns facing agriculture across the country.

For instance, my producers in Oklahoma are concerned and worried about regulations coming down from the Environmental Protection Agency and how they must comply with those regulations.

I am also aware that the death tax is creating difficulties for farming operations. And I want to hear how these Federal policies are affecting producers here.

Today, we will hear from a selection of producers. Unfortunately, we just do not have time to hear from everybody who would like to share their perspective. But we have a place on our website where you can submit those comments in writing. You can visit agriculture.house.gov/farmbill to find that place. And you can also find the address on the postcards available on the table here.

As I said before, we do not have an easy road ahead of us. But I am confident that by working together, we can craft a farm bill that continues to support the success story that American agriculture is.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lucas follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Frank D. Lucas, a Representative in Congress from Oklahoma

Good morning, and thank you all for joining us today for this farm bill field hearing. I'd also like to thank Congressman Schilling for hosting this hearing here in Illinois.

These field hearings are a continuation of what my good friend and Ranking Member Collin C. Peterson started in the spring of 2010. Today, we'll build upon the information we gathered in those hearings, as well as the 11 farm policy audits we conducted this past summer.

We used those audits as an opportunity to thoroughly evaluate farm programs to identify areas where we could improve efficiency.

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One of the reasons we hold field hearings is to get a sense of the diversity of agriculture across this great country.

Let me tell you--in some ways, Illinois and my home state of Oklahoma couldn't be more different. Back home, we don't measure our soil in feet and our rain in inches like you do here.

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As I said before, we don't have an easy road ahead of us. But I'm confident that by working together, we can craft a farm bill that continues to support the success story that is American Agriculture.

The Chairman. And with that, I would like to turn to my colleague, my senior Democratic Member at the hearing today, for any opening statement that he may offer. The gentleman from Iowa, Mr. Boswell.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. LEONARD L. BOSWELL, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM IOWA

Mr. Boswell. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank all of you for being here. I am not trying to stand in for the Ranking Member Collin Peterson, but I am very pleased to be here.

This will probably surprise our Chairman, I do not think so though--might embarrass him. But I think we have an excellent Chairman of the Agriculture Committee that is committed to making it the best we can make it. And I like what he just said, I want to repeat it in my own words.

You know, everybody in this country--everybody in this country--has a vested interest in agriculture. We all eat. And we are not making more land, we are making a lot more people. And I will comment just very briefly, but what we all get, whether it is that guy or lady in downtown New York or L.A. or Dallas or wherever, is the most plentiful, least expensive, safest food in the world. Make no mistake about it. Does not seem like it when you go to the grocery store, but that is true. Just check it out. So we are all invested in it and we ought to be appreciative of that and remember how important it is to all of us. And that is something I think we all need to be promulgating constantly, so I hope you will do that.

It is kind of neat for me to be back in Galesburg, it has been a long time. I came here one time with a Farm Progress Show. Now that takes you back a few years, some of you. Was anybody here at the Farm Progress Show? Well, I had just gotten out of spending a career in the military, come home and started farming again and I bought me a motorcycle, and I brought about six guys on motorcycles to Galesburg and we arrived--it has been a number of years ago--pouring down rain and muddy on the grounds and everything. And here I am on a two-wheeler trying to get around and find a place to park where when you put the kickstand down, it will not just sink.

[Laughter.]

Mr. Boswell. But so much for that. It was a good experience and I feel some real affection for it and you do a lot of things here like we do, just a little bit west of here.

Chairman Lucas made a comment about his soils and so on from Oklahoma. Well, I spent a lot of time at Fort Sill, not too far from him--a lot of time. I have some stewardship over some land. We measure topsoil by the inch as well. So everybody thinks Iowa's topsoil it is feet. Well, some places it is and some places it is here in Illinois, but not everywhere.

The farm program is very important to us and I am just

going to close here and just say this: there is room for everybody in this. You know, I was in the state legislature on the Agriculture Committee and got very involved. I came back to do what I love to do and that is agriculture. We have gone through a time when there is production agriculture, sustainable agriculture, organic agriculture, so on. And there has been a lot of head bumping over it. Let me tell you this is what I think, I think there is room for all of us. We can stop that, we do not need to do that. The farmers' markets are growing like crazy, people want that. The population growth is unbelievable. We are going to be stressed to be able to provide food and fiber for the people of this world. There is room for all of us. So let's work together and let's make it the best we can.

And I certainly agree that the safety net is what we are probably going to be focused on. I think I will be interested in what you have to say so that we understand. You know, Federal crop insurance is available, affordable and so on, and make it work.

So I am just very pleased to be here, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you. I am glad to be in my colleague's district, I appreciate it. I am anxious to hear what you have to tell us so we can do the best we can with the leadership of the Chairman here to bring forth a farm bill.

The Chairman. The gentleman from Iowa yields back his time and I appreciate those very thoughtful words, and we now turn, as is my custom when we are doing a field hearing, to the Member who represents the district that we are in. You would be impressed at how hard and diligently he worked to help make sure that the Agriculture Committee came to his district, the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Schilling is recognized.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT T. SCHILLING, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM ILLINOIS

Mr. Schilling. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, I would like to start out, this week the Illinois ag community lost a very special woman and I wanted to dedicate this opening statement to her. Maralee Johnson was an effective voice for the Illinois Beef Association. Her kindness and passion were always appreciated and her efforts for beef producers across this state will be remembered. Our strongest thoughts and prayers go out to her family. And with that, this one is for Maralee.

First, I want to thank Chairman Lucas for holding this farm bill hearing. I also want to welcome my colleagues, Congressmen Boswell, Conaway and Hultgren. Thank you for coming and welcome to the Illinois 17th District.

This district is blessed with some of the most fruitful and productive soil in the world. In fact, when it comes to the value of sales for corn and soybeans, we rank 14th out of 435 Congressional Districts. We host the Farm Progress Show every other year. We are home to ag manufacturers John Deere and Caterpillar and are among the leading districts for livestock in the country. In short, we are an agricultural powerhouse.

I cannot tell you how much our community appreciates the opportunity to be one of four locations throughout this great nation to discuss the next farm bill. It is good to see that we have some friends from Iowa, Indiana, Ohio, Minnesota in attendance with us today as well.

Before we get started, I also want to thank the fine folks at Carl Sandburg College for opening up their doors for this event. I especially want to thank President Lori Sundberg, Julie Van Fleet, Bill Gaither, Aaron Frey, Robin DeMott, Mary Ann Nelson, Anthony Law of the campus security, Bobby Frederick, my ag specialist and the countless others who helped set this up. Many thanks to the Knox County Sheriff's Department and the Galesburg Police Department as well.

I also want to recognize a great leader in the community, the Mayor of Galesburg, Mayor Sal Garza. We really appreciate all the efforts that he helps with our community to bring and liven up our economics here.

Again, I want to welcome all of our farmers, producers, guests and witnesses here today. I have the honor of representing Deb Moore from Roseville, Dave Erickson from Altona, Gary Asay from Osco and Terry Davis from Roseville, all of whom are here to testify today.

I look forward to hearing from all of you about the 2008 Farm Bill, how it has been effective and how we can improve the future of ag.

Before we get to the testimony, I want to address the issue of bipartisanship and offer insight to the question that almost all of you are asking. Can Congress get a farm bill done this year? In the spirit of Mark Twain, reports of the death of bipartisanship have been greatly exaggerated. After all, it was this Congress that passed the three free trade agreements, repealed the onerous 1099 tax reporting requirement, passed the VOW to Hire Heroes veterans jobs bill, passed the STOCK Act, passed a 4 year FAA reauthorization, and passed a defense bill that will promote workload and jobs for Rock Island Arsenal. All of these laws were bipartisan, I might add.

Do we have our work cut out for us? Absolutely. But this is a bipartisan Committee and we will work together to produce a farm bill that works great for America. We have an economy struggling to regain its footing and a budget crisis to solve. Fortunately, ag has been very, very bright for us; yet, we know the economic production and cycles in ag require us to plan for the future.

At \$136.3 billion in 2011, ag exports have never been higher, and according to the USDA, for every \$1 billion in ag exports, that provides for 8,400 related jobs for men and women here and across America. That is why it is so important that the next farm bill continue to allow producers to do what they do best. At a time when rural populations are looking for new ways to grow our communities, our voice must be stronger than ever and I believe this Committee is up to the task.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to listening to our farm panels today. I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Schilling follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Robert T. Schilling, a Representative in Congress from Illinois

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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President Lori Sundberg,

Julie Van Fleet,

Bill Gaither,

Aaron Frey,

Robin DeMott,

Mary Ann Nelson,

Anthony Law of Campus Security,

And countless others who helped set up this great venue.

Many thanks to the Knox County Sheriff's Department and the

Galesburg Police Department as well.

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At a time when rural populations are looking for new ways to grow our communities, our voice must be stronger than ever and I believe this Committee is up to the task.

With that Mr. Chairman, I look forward to listening to our farm panels today.

The Chairman. Thank you, Congressman Schilling, for yielding back.

The chair would request that other Members submit their opening statements for the record so the witnesses may begin their testimony, and to ensure there is ample time for questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Peterson follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Collin C. Peterson, a Representative in Congress from Minnesota

As we approach the current farm bill's expiration date, we will hear directly from farmers and ranchers across the country on the issues they face every day.

Writing a new farm bill will not be an easy task. Everybody is being asked to do more with less, and, it seems to me, that agriculture is being asked to cut even more than others. I'm particularly troubled by the House Republican budget released this week which, in addition to massive cuts to agriculture and nutrition programs, includes reconciliation instructions asking our Committee to make unrealistic budget cuts. I just don't see how we can make these cuts and then turn around to write a strong farm bill.

The agriculture economy is perhaps the only part of our nation's economy that has remained strong over the last few years. It is amazing to me that those outside of agriculture are trying to mess this up.

Passing a farm bill this year or even next year if it comes to that, is going to be incredibly difficult. We need producers of all regions, representing all commodities, to work together to get a new farm bill across the finish line.

I thank the witnesses for making the time to testify hear today.

The Chairman. I would like to welcome our first panel of witnesses to the table--Mr. David C. Erickson, corn and soybean

producer, Altona, Illinois; Ms. Deborah L. Moore, corn, soybean, and beef producer, Roseville Illinois; Mr. John Mages, corn and soybean producer, Belgrade, Minnesota; Mr. Blake Gerard, rice, soybean, wheat, and corn producer, McClure, Illinois; and Mr. Craig Adams, corn, soybean, wheat, hay, and beef producer--you are a busy man--Leesburg, Ohio.

Mr. Erickson, please begin when you are ready.

STATEMENT OF DAVID C. ERICKSON, CORN AND SOYBEAN PRODUCER,
ALTONA, IL

Mr. Erickson. Thank you. My name is David Erickson, I am a Knox County farmer from Altona, Illinois. And as a life long resident here in Knox County, I want to welcome the Committee and in particular Chairman Lucas, Ranking Member Peterson, all the other Members of the Committee. We appreciate your commitment to come here to our community for this hearing. And in particular, I want to thank Congressman Schilling for his persistence in not only serving the district, but in making sure that this all-important hearing is here, as well as the work of his staff. Thank you very much.

My wife Nancy and I operate a corn and soybean farming operation and a farm management business that serves absentee landowners. Our businesses are truly family owned and established through the work of the previous two generations of our families. We continue to enjoy the involvement of three generations of our families in production agriculture and work with multi-generations of landowners through our farm management business. We are extremely optimistic about the future of agriculture.

I believe that farm businesses should be rewarded for their work in the global marketplace and that we need to continue to support efforts to open, develop and further expand markets for agricultural products and commodities, both domestically and globally. The impacts that these products have had here locally is beyond question. Agricultural exports support jobs here at home and particularly when we add value through enhancing our basic commodities.

I urge Congress to continue to support trade agreements and initiatives that provide increased access, improved acceptance and fair trade policies for U.S. agriculture. Congress has an important job ahead of it.

As farmers, we protect and enhance our environment because we know the importance of sustained rich soil and clean water that supports our family and our consuming public. Some current conservation programs are over-burdened with rules and procedures and do little to impact programs except use up limited budget allocations. I urge Congress to consider simplifying, consolidating our current conservation programs to allow for the most effective use of those funds budgeted for these efforts.

As a taxpayer, I want Congress to cut spending, reduce waste and improve results with our investment. I believe that the Federal budget deficits must be eliminated and debt reduced. I feel strongly that agriculture should do its part to help Congress in this endeavor.

I know that much of the discussion to date about the farm bill has led to proposed elimination of direct payments. While I understand the need for change, I also must report how direct payments in our farming operations are beneficial and effective. Without the assistance of any other government programs, we invested these direct payments back into our farming operation to reduce soil erosion, improve drainage, limit nutrient runoff and manage price risk. We made effective use of those dollars and taxpayers reap the rewards with a safe, abundant, low cost supply of food and fiber.

I understand the importance of Federal crop insurance as a part of risk management and I know that too much emphasis also on any single approach can be dangerous. Federal crop insurance should provide risk coverage for crop losses but not for poor marketing and overall risk management. Farming is a risky business. We need tools to help us manage these risks but those risks can never be totally eliminated.

I urge you to consider streamlining farm program paperwork. A vast majority of Illinois farmland is owned by someone other than who physically operates it. Absentee landowners are reaching the end of their desire to comply with all the requirements of farm program participation. Their frustration will only lead to lower participation and the increased likelihood of cash only rental arrangements that do nothing but

compound the risk already that farmers must bear.

I encourage your continued work to complete the farm bill legislation this year and to make it a 5 year program that does not rely on temporary extensions. No aspect of the commodity title fits all operations or regions, but I trust you to work diligently to craft legislation that provides flexibility for the inherent diversity that encompasses U.S. agriculture.

I thank you for the privilege to address the Committee and appreciate the great efforts involved in bringing this hearing to my home.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Erickson follows:]

Prepared Statement of David C. Erickson, Corn and Soybean Producer,
Altona, IL

My name is David C. Erickson. I am a Knox County farmer from Altona, Illinois. As a life-long Knox County resident, I want to extend a warm welcome and sincere appreciation to Chairman Lucas, Ranking Member Peterson and all the Members of the Committee for bringing this most important Field Hearing to Galesburg. I applaud your efforts to seek input from constituents on the important issues facing agriculture policy and your willingness to bring the inner workings of Congress to the people in their home communities. I also want to recognize the efforts of Congressman Schilling and his staff for their persistence in serving the 17th Congressional District in Illinois and in hosting the Committee in the District for this important Farm Policy Hearing. I am very proud of Knox County and hope that you will find the people here friendly, engaged and thoughtful just as I have.

My wife, Nancy, and I operate a corn and soybean farming operation and manage farmland for absentee landowners with our farm management business. Our businesses are truly family owned and were established through the work of the prior two generations in our families. We continue to enjoy the involvement of three generations of our families in production agriculture and work with multiple generations of active landowner participation in our farm management business. We are extremely optimistic about the future of the agriculture industry and are confident in the ability of the agriculture industry to support a significant portion of our local, state and national economy.

After college and a 4 year experience as a high school and community college teacher, I began to farm full-time in 1984 with the 1985 crop year being my first full season. Production and prices have certainly changed considerable from that era of sub \$2 corn, sub \$5 soybeans and idled acres (set aside) of 10% to 20% very common. Through many years of involvement in leadership positions in agriculture organizations, I have had the opportunity to participate in Farm Policy discussions and have been actively involved with farm bills since 1990. The change from one farm bill to the next has been mostly evolutionary, but looks rather revolutionary from a rearview perspective. I enjoy farm policy discussions and still find the process as interesting as it was to me that first time.

I believe that farm businesses should be rewarded for their work in the global marketplace. I continue to support the efforts to open, develop and further expand markets for all agriculture commodities both domestically and globally. I know that historical efforts to limit production to improve prices only hurt U.S. production capabilities and encouraged our competitors. I have no doubt that through research, development and challenging competition, farmers will meet the growing needs and tastes of the world population. We are a country of many resources and our ability to effectively use those resources will be paramount to our future and that of our neighbors throughout the world. Agricultural exports support jobs here at home particularly when we add value to those basic commodities through processing and enhancements. U.S. agriculture must be allowed to participate in the growing global marketplace. I urge Congress to continue to support trade agreements and initiatives that provide increased access, improved acceptance and fair trade policies for U.S. agriculture products and commodities.

Congress must limit unnecessary and burdensome regulations that increase costs, reduce productivity and decrease opportunities for current and future generations. Something as simple as protecting young people from the threat of workplace accidents or abusive working conditions can lead to over-regulation that sacrifices developing a strong work ethic in our youth. Young people must be allowed to learn how to work and work safely or we risk losing an effective, motivated workforce in future generations. Work on the family farm is rewarding and builds life lessons that lead to future successes for young people. Employers have long recognized the strong work ethic of young people from rural areas as a positive skill for future employees. Regulations protect us in everyday life, but when overused, serve no purpose to a productive society.

We must be prudent stewards of our natural resources. Farmers

protect and enhance our environment, because they know the importance of sustaining the rich soil and clean water that supports their family and the consuming public. I feel that conservation programs are important to the farm policy decisions that we make. Some current conservation programs are overburdened with rules, procedures and standards that do little to impact the programs except to use up limited budget allocations. Congress must not lose sight of the positive impact that past voluntary incentive conservation programs have provided. I urge Congress to consider simplifying and consolidating current conservation programs to allow for the most effective use of funds budgeted to these efforts.

As a taxpayer, I want Congress to cut spending, reduce waste and improve results with our investment. I believe that Federal budget deficits must be eliminated and debt reduced. I feel strongly that agriculture should do its part to help Congress achieve those goals.

I know that much of the discussion to date about the new farm bill has led to the proposed elimination of direct payments. While I understand the need for change, I must also report to you how direct payments in our farming operations were beneficial and cost effective. As farmers and farmland owners, we used those payments to implement conservation plans, develop needed grassed waterways, utilize grid soil sampling to manage nutrient use, invest in equipment upgrades for conservation and no-till farming while also developing risk management marketing practices. Without the assistance of any other programs, we invested these direct payments back into our operation to reduce soil erosion, improve drainage, limit nutrient run-off and manage price risk. We made effective use of those dollars and taxpayers reap the rewards of a safe, abundant, low cost supply of food and fiber.

A reasonable safety net must still be a part of the farm bill to ensure that production agriculture can withstand the inevitable variability in prices and production, neither of which are in our complete control. I understand the importance of Federal Crop Insurance as a part of risk management, but I also know that too much emphasis on any single approach to risk management is dangerous. We have not used Federal Crop Insurance because the associated cost has not calculated into a sound business decision for us. We have worked to improve our financial stability, we are fortunate to have long term relationships for land rental and our environment has produced fairly consistent yields. There may have been times when we might have received insurance payments, but those payments would pale in comparison to the accumulated cost of premiums over the years. Federal Crop Insurance should provide risk coverage for crop losses, but not for poor marketing and overall risk management. Farming is a risky business subject to weather, price, political, trade, speculation and other influencing factors. We need tools to help us manage these risks, but those risks can never be nor should be totally eliminated.

I urge you to consider streamlining farm program paperwork and the near endless amount of information that must be provided. A vast majority of Illinois farmland is owned by someone other than who physically operates the land. Absentee landowners are reaching the end of their desire to comply with all of the requirements for farm program participation. Their frustration will only lead to lower participation or increase the likelihood of cash only rental arrangements which only compounds the risk that farmers must bear.

I encourage your continued work to complete the farm bill legislation this year and to make it a 5 year program that does not rely on a temporary extension. All the programs contained within the legislation must have the ability to plan for the future and know that a multi-year farm bill is the key to that confidence. No aspect of the commodity title fits all operations or regions. I trust you to work diligently to craft legislation which provides flexibility for the inherent diversity that encompasses U.S. agriculture.

I thank you for the privilege to address the Committee today and appreciate the great efforts required to bring this important hearing to my home.

The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Erickson.
Ms. Moore, you may begin when you're ready.

STATEMENT OF DEBORAH L. MOORE, CORN, SOYBEAN, AND BEEF PRODUCER, ROSEVILLE, IL

Ms. Moore. Good morning. I would like to start by thanking Chairman Lucas, Congressman Peterson, Congressman Schilling, and the other Members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify here today.

My name is Deb Moore. I farm near Roseville in western Illinois with my husband, Ron, and his brother, Larry. We farm about 2,000 acres of corn and soybeans and have a beef cattle operation.

I thank you for the opportunity to talk about the value and importance of farm programs to operations like ours. For more than 30 years, we have been active family farmers who are concerned about caring for our land and sharing our farm story. I was actually born and raised in Chicago suburbs and moved to the farm after marrying Ron, who is a third generation Warren County farmer.

Farmers like us face many challenges and opportunities in today's global marketplace. We must continue to become more efficient and also manage more risk. As crop prices have increased over the last couple of years, so have expenses. We must find ways collectively to manage these risks.

From 2010 to 2011, our income increased 50 percent but our expenses increased 58 percent. Our major expenses each year are cash rent, fertilizer, seed and crop protectants. All of these have doubled in cost over the last few years. Last year, we purchased all of our farm inputs for our 2012 crop, a full year before that crop will need to be harvested.

Another major challenge we face is educating consumers about agriculture and the importance of our industry to food production and the economic well-being of our country. I am involved with Ag in the Classroom programs and Illinois Farm Families.

Illinois Farm Families invited Chicago moms to have their questions about food and farming answered by Illinois farmers. After making their own judgment about our methods and procedures, they share their experience using social media.

I share this information with you because it is important for you to know as we educate consumers about agriculture, they gain a better understanding of why it is important for tax dollars to be used for agriculture. When consumers see for themselves how we care for our animals, the land, the environment, and gain a better understanding of how agriculture bolsters the national economy, we see more support for U.S. agriculture in the Federal budget.

My family believes that farm programs play an important role in underpinning the strength of the farm economy, which supports the overall U.S. economy. The importance of an effective safety net for farm income has grown with the rise in cost of farm inputs. We recognize that in the present budget environment, farm programs are a target of interest from either groups that oppose them in principle or who want to use those funds for other projects.

Let me review five of the farm bill titles and my position:

In the commodity title, we support risk management proposals and other programs that enable us to better manage risk, maintain planting flexibility, avoid restructuring of existing crop insurance programs, and are compliant with current U.S. WTO commitments.

We use Federal crop insurance, marketing loans, futures and options, hedge-to-arrive contracts to protect our financial investment in times of extreme volatility of commodity prices and input costs.

Let me also add that credit for new farmers is important to the future of agriculture. With the expenses we face, it would be very difficult for a new farmer to secure enough credit to take over an operation from an existing farmer.

In conservation, we support practices on working land. We would like to reduce the acreage cap on CRP in order to achieve budget savings and allow U.S. producers to respond to growing demands.

Conservation projects that protect the environment are extremely important to farmers. Our farm is 30 percent no-till, 70 percent minimum-till.

We have relied on cost share programs that reduce erosion through stream bank restoration, CRP waterways and dry dams. But there are not enough resources to do all the necessary work.

In energy, we support reauthorization and funding for Biodiesel Fuel Education Program and Biobased Market Program and would like to see reauthorization of the Bioenergy Program for Advanced Fuel.

In research, we would like to see the Agriculture & Food Research Initiative reauthorized and funding maintained for research at land-grant universities to help us better manage production challenges.

For trade, we need reauthorization and funding for the Foreign Market Development Program and the Market Access Program and continue Food for Education and food aid programs.

Again, let me emphasize that I strongly support these and

other titles be part of the 2012 Farm Bill, including support for commodity programs, conservation, research, energy, export promotion and food assistance programs.

I thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Moore follows:]

Prepared Statement of Deborah L. Moore, Corn, Soybean, and Beef Producer, Roseville, IL

Good morning. I would like to start by thanking Chairman Lucas, Congressman Peterson, Congressman Schilling, and other Members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify here today.

My name is Deb Moore. I farm near Roseville in western Illinois with my husband, Ron, and his brother, Larry. We have about 2,000 acres of corn and soybeans and a feeder cattle operation with 200 acres of pasture. I am a member of the Illinois Soybean Association and the Illinois Farm Bureau. Ron and I are also members of the corn and beef associations.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to be here today to talk about the value and importance of farm programs to modern U.S. agriculture operations like ours. For more than 30 years, we have been active family farmers who are concerned about both caring for the land and sharing the farm story with the public. I was actually born and raised in suburban Chicago and moved to the farm after marrying Ron, who is a third generation Warren County farmer. Both of his grandfathers farmed in Warren County. We like to tell our sons' friends that there are more steers per square mile than there are people in Section 5 of Roseville Township.

Farmers like us face many challenges and opportunities in today's global marketplace. As we continue to become more efficient and grow food for the world on the same number of acres, we must be innovative and also manage more risk. As crop prices have increased over the last couple of years, so have expenses. We must find ways collectively to manage such challenges.

Currently our only income is from the farm. With higher commodity prices has come a higher input cost. From 2010 to 2011, our income increased 50 percent, but our expenses increased 58 percent. Our major expenses each crop year include cash rent, followed by fertilizer, seed and crop protectants. Fertilizer expenses have more than doubled in the last 4 years, crop protectants costs are up 30 percent, cash rent, seed and fuel have doubled in cost over the last few years. I would also add that we have not increased our production acres during this time either, only the expense per acre of planting the crop. In the fall of 2011, we purchased our seed, fertilizer and crop protectants for the 2012 crop, a full year before that crop will be harvested. We pay for crop expenses a year ahead to guarantee supply and prices.

We do what we can to manage the financial risk as much as possible, but every year is different. Weather, disease and prices play a major role in our profitability. High commodity prices are of absolutely no use to us if we lose a crop to extreme weather conditions. One storm can wipe out an entire crop and jeopardize a farm in a matter of minutes. We have had several wind storms that have taken down buildings and flattened our crops. In those situations, we had to run the combine in one direction with a reel to harvest most of our crop. We were luckier than many other farmers, we still had a crop to harvest but the expense increased greatly with added fuel and additional wear on the machinery.

Another major challenge we face is in educating consumers about agriculture and the importance of our industry to food production and the economic well-being of our country. I taught school when we were first married and then stayed home to raise our three sons. I did go back to teaching for 8 years while the boys were in college to help pay their tuition. My teaching position was eliminated 2 years ago, but I still have a passion for teaching others about farming. I am involved with the Ag in the Classroom program and have hosted multiple school field trips, participated in classroom visits, and hosted urban teachers to our farm.

I also have become involved with Illinois Farm Families, a group that focuses on a different way of communicating with consumers than in the past. Illinois Farm Families are actively seeking a dialogue with urban consumers about food and farming concerns.

In this last year, Illinois Farm Families invited Chicago-area moms to see a variety of farms and get their questions answered. More than 70 interested moms applied for the program and nine were chosen to spend the year touring Illinois farms. I am one of the farm mom hostesses spending time with these field moms while they tour our farms. Each tour allows the moms to dig into food and farming topics and make their own judgments about our methods and performance. After the tours, the moms share their experiences with others using social media.

Last summer, my family was one of five Illinois farm families

featured in an online program where consumers watched a video tour of our farm to learn about farming. We know more than 135,000 Illinois consumers viewed the farmer videos, many of whom we still communicate with through e-newsletters. In June, we will host the field moms for a closer look at our family farm.

I share this information with you because it is important for you to know that as we educate consumers about agriculture, they gain a better understanding of why it is important for tax dollars to help support agriculture. When consumers see for themselves how we care for the land, our animals and the environment and gain a better understanding of how agriculture bolsters the national economy and feeds their own families as well as those around the world, we see more support for making sure U.S. agriculture is a wise investment in the Federal budget.

My family believes that farm programs play an important role in underpinning the strength of the farm economy which supports the overall U.S. economy. The importance of an effective safety net for farm income has grown as the rising cost of farm inputs has increasingly pressured farm profitability. We recognize that, in the current budget environment, farm programs are a target for interests that either oppose them in principle or want to fund other priorities. I am willing to accept our fair share of budget costs, but in proportion with other programs that may be explored for budget cuts. Our family supports ways to make farm programs more efficient, effective and defensible.

Let me review five of the farm bill titles and my position:

Commodity title. We support Risk Management proposals and other programs that enable us to better manage risk, maintain planting flexibility, avoid restructuring of the existing crop insurance program, and are in compliance with current U.S. World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments.

We use Federal Crop Insurance (Revenue Assurance), hail insurance, market loans, futures and options and Hedge-to-Arrive contracts to protect our financial investment in times of extreme volatility of commodity prices and input costs.

Our farm usually takes loans out every year for corn and soybean production to help with cash flow. We get our loans through our local Farm Service Agency office and the Commodity Credit Corporation.

Let me also add that credit for new farmers is important to the future of agriculture. With the expenses we face, it would be very difficult for a new farmer to secure enough credit to take over an operation from an established farmer. Farmers borrow more money each year than most Americans will borrow in a lifetime.

Conservation title. We support programs for conservation practices on working lands. We would like to reduce the acreage cap on the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in order to achieve budget savings and allow U.S. producers to respond to growing demand.

Conservation projects are extremely important to farmers. We emphasize conservation projects that protect the environment. Our farm is 30 percent no-till and 70 percent minimum till. But there are not enough resources to do all of the necessary work.

We have relied on the cost share programs available through USDA and the Illinois Department of Agriculture. We have done stream bank restoration to reduce erosion on pasture land and have CRP waterways to reduce field level erosion on 200 acres. We also installed seven dry dams on 140 acres to reduce erosion and improve productivity.

Energy title. We support reauthorization and funding for the Biodiesel Fuel Education Program and Biobased Market Program and would like to see reauthorization of the Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels.

Research title. We would like to see the Agriculture & Food Research Initiative (AFRI) reauthorized for competitive research grants and funding maintained for research at land-grant universities. I believe that we need to continue investing in research with Illinois universities to advance research that can help us better manage production challenges. We need public funding and researcher support to maintain a

comprehensive research program.

Trade title. We need reauthorization and funding for the Foreign Market Development (FMD) Program at \$34.5 million annually and the Market Access Program (MAP) at \$200 million annually and continue Food for Education and food aid programs.

Again, let me emphasize that I strongly support these and other titles be part of the 2012 Farm Bill, including support for commodity programs, conservation, research, energy, and export promotion and food assistance programs.

That concludes my comments today. I look forward to working with you and other Members of the Committee as you write the next farm bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your time.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Mages, whenever you are prepared, you may begin.

STATEMENT OF JOHN MAGES, CORN AND SOYBEAN PRODUCER, BELGRADE,
MN

Mr. Mages. Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, I want to thank you for letting me testify today. Ranking Member Peterson is actually my Congressman in my district in Minnesota.

My name is John Mages and my wife, Cindy, and I farm in central Minnesota near Belgrade. We farm 1,200 acres of corn and soybeans.

If I had to sum up my views on the next farm bill, it would be as follows:

Pass a 5 year farm bill this year.

Give farmers a menu of policy options to choose from.

Be sure that every one of those options has protection against long periods of low prices.

Do not change the pay limit or AGI rules again.

And above all, do not do anything to hurt crop insurance.

We need a 5 year farm bill for the same reason we need long-term tax policy. We need to be able to go to the banker and be able to make plans for the future.

Farmers need a choice, because it is obvious to almost everyone that you cannot squeeze the same crop into the same program and make it work for all crops. If the farm bill does not work for all crops, then I think the chances of it passing Congress and becoming law are low.

This past week, I made the rounds on Capitol Hill with fellow farmers from seven states growing nearly every crop and I want each one of them to have a policy that works for them as well as one that works for myself. Whatever options farmers have to choose from, there needs to be a mechanism to deal with the long-term low prices.

None of you wants to be in Washington writing emergency assistance legislation because the farm bill was not designed to handle a financial crisis.

On pay limits and AGI, the new rules that just came out about 2 years ago, I know this sort of thing is cast off as being friendly for the family farmer, but these rules are now hitting the family farmer. More and more of those advocating these kind of rules seem like the real goal is to adjust the real farm policy. Now they want to put these rules on crop insurance. I doubt any home, business or car owner would want his identity means tested or his pay limited because of the measure of his loss.

Finally, do not hurt crop insurance. I know this is the mantra these days, but we do need to make sure, for example, that revenue programs do not duplicate crop insurance, which would hurt us. But supplement it by helping to ease parts of the farmer's deductible which can get high in some parts of the country, especially if the producer's actual production history lags.

Thank you again for inviting me and I will look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mages follows:]

Prepared Statement of John Mages, Corn and Soybean Producer, Belgrade,
MN

Chairman Lucas, Ranking Member Peterson, Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before the House Agriculture Committee to share our views on the 2012 Farm Bill.

My name is John Mages and I am a corn and soybean farmer from near

Belgrade, Minnesota in Stearns County. I am also President of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association.

I believe that farm policy designed to support a strong and dynamic U.S. agriculture sector is vital. Federal Crop Insurance and the farm policies that have been in place for more than a decade have generally served this nation and producers well. I am proud to stand by a policy that has been under budget for the past 10 years, accounts for only about one quarter of one percent of the Federal budget, guarantees American consumers the lowest grocery bills, as a percentage of disposable income, of any consumer in the world, and constitutes the one bright spot in our economy and our nation's balance of trade.

However, I understand that budget and other pressures may require that a new approach be taken in the 2012 Farm Bill and, as such, I would like to set out the policy priorities of Minnesota producers like me.

First and foremost, please do no harm to Federal Crop Insurance, which should be preserved, protected, and strengthened. We strongly oppose any further legislative or administrative cuts to Federal Crop Insurance, and we oppose carrying conservation compliance or other rules applicable to the farm bill over to this critical risk management tool that we as producers help pay for. We also believe that improvements to Actual Production History (APH), continued availability of enterprise units, and the ability to stack supplemental area-wide coverage on top of individual coverage can all work to help erase at least a part of a producer's deductible.

Second, the triggering mechanism under farm policy needs to be updated to provide tailored and reliable protection in the event of multiple-year low prices such as we experienced in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Price protection over multiple years is the main point of a farm bill because it is the one thing that Federal Crop Insurance is not designed to do. We need price protection under any option a producer might be given in the farm bill. If there is not price protection and prices collapse, we will see a repeat of what we saw in the mid 1980s and late 1990s which is a financial crisis followed by very costly and inefficient ad hoc disaster assistance.

Third, it is apparent that farmers need options in the 2012 Farm Bill. It is clear, for example, that revenue programs may work for some producers, but not for others. Even among producers who like the idea of a revenue program, there is a split on whether it should be done on a national, state, crop reporting district, county, or on an on-farm level. Within Minnesota alone, there is probably a rough geographic line where producers may prefer area wide revenue on one side and on-farm revenue on the other, while some Minnesota producers may prefer a price-based option instead. We think allowing producers to choose from options in order to best meet the risks they face on their farms is a good approach.

Whatever options are made available in the 2012 Farm Bill, they should be plain and bankable, tailored to losses and, thus, defensible, and built to weather prolonged periods of low prices. Toward this end, we generally feel that the 2011 Farm Bill proposal that you developed last fall met these goals.

Fourth, since the farm bill options under discussion would only kick in to cover actual loss situations, whether revenue or price losses, it seems that arbitrary payment limits and means tests for producers should be eliminated. It is one thing to limit or means test Direct Payments paid on historical bases and yields but it makes no sense to do this against revenue or price losses that a farmer sustains on his operation. Farm policy is intended to help U.S. producers compete against heavily subsidized and protected foreign competitors and arbitrary rules frustrate this goal rather than advance it.

Fifth, we very much need a 5 year farm bill passed into law this year. The prospect of having to make plans, secure loans, and plant under a short term extension or no law at all is not a good one for producers.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to offer testimony on the crafting of the 2012 Farm Bill.

The Chairman. Absolutely, thank you.

Mr. Gerard, begin whenever you are ready, sir.

STATEMENT OF BLAKE GERARD, RICE, SOYBEAN, WHEAT, AND CORN
PRODUCER, McCLURE, IL

Mr. Gerard. Chairman Lucas, Members of the Committee, good morning and thank you for inviting me to testify today.

The Chairman. Pull your microphone up just a little closer, sir. These things seem to be very directional.

Mr. Gerard. My name is Blake Gerard and I am from Alexander County in Illinois, the southernmost county in the State of Illinois. I am a rice, soybean, corn and wheat producer. I

appreciate the opportunity to come here today and give you my top five priorities for the 2012 Farm Bill.

The first of which being I would like to see us pass a 5 year farm bill this year. We farmers are businessmen and we depend on the stability and certainty of long-term farm policy.

Second, we farmers need a choice of policy options. Producers of some crops face different risks than producers of other crops. In fact, sometimes producers of the same crop coming from different regions of the country face different risks. We have an opportunity right now to craft a farm bill that will address the risks on the farm. It is not so easy for me to go home and craft my risk to match farm policy. The proposal that was developed last fall would have worked for all producers, from my perspective.

Third, each farm policy option that we present to producers needs to have price protection that will address periods of prolonged low prices. This is the very purpose of the origination of the farm bill, but what has happened since the 2008 Farm Bill was enacted, the production costs have increased significantly to the point that they are not adequate to prevent a financial crisis in the agriculture industry if prices were to collapse, such as they did in the late 1990s. Target price and loan rates are much too low at this point to be relevant. The ACRE program has not worked, as evidenced by current participation rates. Direct payments, while they have been helpful, cannot respond to a collapse of prices. Along with that, crop insurance is not designed to work effectively in prolonged periods of low prices.

Okay, fourth, the farm bill should not change payment limitations. We just made major changes in the last farm bill, which were not fully implemented up until 2 years ago, and I am competing in a global marketplace with competitors that benefit from rising subsidies and protectionist tariffs, while at the same time funding for my farm bill has decreased to record low levels.

And fifth, I would like to see crop insurance strengthened to where it will work equitably for all commodities. Fortunately, I can say as a corn and soybean producer that crop insurance is working effectively for me. But for my rice enterprise, crop insurance has not been working effectively and I think we need to put all hands on deck to focus on improving crop insurance to where it can work effectively for all commodities.

The bottom line for me is when I look at the farm policy options that are on the table today, from my rice enterprise, the revenue program totally does not work. My risks on my rice enterprise are price risks and production cost risks. I need a price-based safety net.

Then when I analyze it and I step over to my corn and soybean production and I look at the options that are on the table, I am concerned about the current revenue programs that are in place, that are on the table today because there is still yet no price-based protection in these programs that are offered. In other words, if we get into a period, which I feel like we will with the cyclical nature of agriculture, of prolonged low prices, the revenue guarantee under the current revenue programs that are proposed will fall along with those low prices. At that point, we have no safety net. At that point, we will have people requesting ad hoc disaster legislation, which is not fiscally responsible, it is not fair to the American farmer or the American taxpayer.

So summing it up, let me just say this; I feel like the proposal that was put together last fall by this Committee, with what you had to work with, the time frame you were working in and the funding level that you had to work with, you did a very effective job putting a proposal together that will work for all producers. And also it saved money, a significant sum of money, for the American taxpayers. You offered up a program that gave the producers a choice and both choices, the revenue program and the price-based program had a price protection built into it. I think we are on the right track and I think we need to stay on that track.

I appreciate the opportunity to come here and express my beliefs today. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gerard follows:]

Prepared Statement of Blake Gerard, Rice, Soybean, Wheat, and Corn
Producer, McClure, IL

Introduction

Chairman Lucas, Ranking Member Peterson, and Members of the

Committee, thank you for holding this hearing concerning farm policy and the 2012 Farm Bill. I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony on farm policy from the perspective of a diversified grain producer.

My name is Blake Gerard. I raise rice, soybeans, wheat, and corn in Alexander and Union counties in southern Illinois and I have been farming on my own now for 16 years. I am the fourth generation in my family to farm this land and this is my 13th year to farm rice in Illinois. I am also co-owner in a seed conditioning facility that does contract seed production, conditioning, packaging & warehousing. All of our soybeans are raised for seed along with about 75% of our rice. In addition to my farm and seed business, I also serve as the commissioner for the East Cape Girardeau/Clear Creek Levee & Drainage District, the Illinois Crop Improvement Association and am a member of the USA Rice Producers' Group Board of Directors.

Importance of Agriculture and Cost-Effective Farm Policy

U.S. agriculture shares a certain amount of pride for what we do for the nation's economy. Agriculture still matters.

Over the course of the current economic downturn, here is an excerpt of what objective sources ranging from the Federal Reserve to The Wall Street Journal had to say about what America's farmers and ranchers have been doing to help get our nation back on track and people back to work:

``In 2010, rural America was at the forefront of the economic recovery . . . [R]ising exports of farm commodities and manufactured goods spurred job growth and income gains in rural communities . . . If recent history holds true, rural America could lead U.S. economic gains in 2011.' Federal Reserve of Kansas City, 2010 report."

``Growers' improved lot is rippling out to other industries."
The Wall Street Journal, October 12, 2010.

We read the same kinds of reports during the last recession when the manufacturing sector was in crisis:

``Farm Belt Is Becoming a Driver for Overall Economy . . . The present boom is proving that agriculture still matters in the U.S. Rising farm incomes are helping to ease the blow of the loss of manufacturing jobs in Midwest states . . . The farm sector is a significant source of strength for the U.S. economy,' says Sung Won Sohn, chief economist of Wells Fargo Bank . . . Although farmers themselves are a tiny part of the population, they have an outsize impact on the economy because farming is such an expensive enterprise. A full-time Midwest grain farmer often owns millions of dollars of equipment and land, and spends hundreds of thousands of dollars annually on supplies." The Wall Street Journal, December 17, 2003.

And, for those old enough to remember the 1980s, publications such as The Economist recalled the impact on the rest of the economy when agriculture was not doing well:

``The 1990s were so good [for Chicago] partly because the 1980s had been so bad. Everything that could possibly have gone wrong did' says William Testa, the senior economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago. The region was hit by a crushing combination of high energy prices, a strong dollar, high interest rates, and a farm recession." The Economist, May 12, 2001

Last year alone, U.S. farmers and ranchers spent nearly \$320 billion in communities across the country to produce agriculture products valued at some \$410 billion. Put in perspective, the value of total U.S. agriculture production was greater than the 2010 GDP of all but 25 nations, and total production cost was greater than all but 28. And, according to the Department of Agriculture, U.S. agriculture is expected to positively contribute \$26.5 billion to the U.S. balance of trade in Fiscal Year 2012 after having contributed over \$40 billion just the year before.

And, one of the reasons we are here today, I expect, is because while U.S. agriculture is critically important to America, farm policy is also critically important to U.S. agriculture.

Without farm policy, U.S. producers would be unilaterally exposed to global markets distorted by withering high foreign subsidies and tariffs, and have no comprehensive safety net. In fact, DTB & Associates issued a report last fall, similar to the study on tariffs and subsidies developed and maintained by Texas Tech University (<http://www.depts.ttu.edu/ceri/index.aspx>), which found that:

“U.S. subsidies . . . have dropped to very low levels in recent years. In the meantime, there has been a major increase in subsidization among advanced developing countries . . . Since the countries involved are major producers and consumers of agricultural products, the trade-distorting effects of the subsidies are being felt globally. However, because the run-up in subsidies is a recent development, and because countries have not reported the new programs to the WTO or have failed in their notifications to calculate properly the level of support, the changes have attracted little attention. We believe that when trade officials examine these developments, they will discover clear violations of WTO commitments.”

This aggressive increase in foreign subsidies and tariffs might also explain why foreign competitors worked to derail WTO Doha Round negotiations, causing then Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Senate Finance Committee and House Ways & Means Committee to register their opposition to pursuing a lopsided agreement against the U.S. interests:

“Since the WTO Doha Round was launched in 2001, we have supported the Administration’s efforts to achieve a balanced outcome that would provide meaningful new market access for U.S. agricultural products . . . particularly from developed and key emerging markets. Unfortunately, the negotiating texts currently on the table would provide little if any new market access for U.S. goods, and important developing countries are demanding even further concessions from the United States.”
Ways & Means Committee Chairman and Ranking Member Rangel and McCrery and Finance Committee Chairman and Ranking Member Baucus and Grassley.

Moreover, while many successfully negotiated trade agreements have promised market access gains for agriculture, much of what was promised has yet to materialize or is continually threatened by artificial sanitary, phytosanitary (SPS) and other non-tariff barriers. This is why programs such as the Market Access Program and Foreign Market Development Program are of vital concern to the rice industry and must be reauthorized in the 2012 Farm Bill. It has not gone unnoticed that budget reductions currently being considered (such as the elimination of the Direct Payment) will result in a dollar for dollar loss in farm income. Producers must be provided the tools not only to attack these obstacles to trade but to increase exports through market promotion and thereby increase farm income through increased open and fair trade.

But, beyond even these barriers that are imposed by foreign competitors are barriers to exports imposed in whole or in part by the U.S. Government. For example, rice was completely excluded from the free trade agreement negotiated with South Korea, foreclosing for the foreseeable future any new market access for U.S. rice producers in that country. Iraq, once a top export market for U.S. rice, has instituted restrictive specifications on rice imports that have led to a 77 percent drop in sales of U.S. rice to that country. In the pending Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations, Japan has indicated an interest in joining. The U.S. rice industry supports Japan joining the negotiations, but only if additional market access for U.S. rice into Japan is part of the agreement. Our industry cannot support an agreement where market access for our product is categorically off the negotiating table. Another market that has the potential to become a top five export market almost immediately is Cuba. Unfortunately, the U.S. Government maintains restrictions on our agricultural exports to this country. Cuba was once the number one export market for U.S. rice prior to the embargo and we believe it is potentially a 400,000 to 600,000 ton market if normal commercial agricultural exports are allowed to resume.

In total, U.S. rice exports to date for the current marketing year are down 24 percent compared to last year.

And, while the rice industry is still a long ways off from having a crop insurance product that is relevant to rice producers, the general need for Federal involvement in insuring crops where losses are highly correlated is also obvious, as even the American Enterprise Institute has admitted:

“The empirical evidence on the viability of either area-yield or multiple-peril crop insurance seems clear. When normal commercial loading factors are applied, the premiums required by insurers to offer an actuarially viable private crop insurance contract are sufficiently high to reduce the demand for such contracts to zero . . . Thus, private markets for multiple-peril crop insurance are almost surely infeasible, and the weight of the empirical evidence indicates that area-yield contracts are also not commercially viable . . .” American

Enterprise Institute, "The Economics of Crop Insurance and Disaster Aid," 1995.

Fortunately, for the American taxpayer, in addition to all of these justifications on why we have a farm policy in this country, we can add to the list at least one more reason: farm policy is cost-effective.

In fact, U.S. farm policy has operated under budget for over a decade and accounts for only $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1 percent of the total Federal budget. Not including additional cuts scheduled under sequestration, U.S. farm policy has, to date, been cut by about \$18 billion over the past 9 years, including in the 2004 and 2010 Standard Reinsurance Agreements (SRAs), the FY2006 reconciliation package, and the 2008 Farm Bill.

In the most recent 5 years, average funding for U.S. farm policy, based on real funding levels, including crop insurance, was \$12.9 billion per year, which is 28% less than the previous 5 year average of \$17.9 billion and 31% less than the average of \$18.8 billion that incurred in the preceding 5 years. In the current year, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that crop insurance policy will cost slightly more than the current commodity policies. And according to CBO projections for the next 10 years the estimated annual cost for commodity policy in the farm bill is \$6.6 billion on average (before the expected reductions are made as part of this farm bill process), while the estimated annual cost for crop insurance policy is \$8.8 billion on average. With the current suite of crop insurance policies not working effectively for rice producers, this puts our industry at a further disadvantage and highlights the need to maintain an effective commodity policy in the farm bill that will work for rice.

Funding of that portion of farm policy that assists rice producers has declined from \$1.2 billion a decade ago to about \$400 million annually, with this amount largely reflecting Direct Payments.

Meanwhile, U.S. consumers are paying less than 10% of disposable income on food, less than consumers in any other nation.

This is why I believe so firmly that future cuts must focus on areas of the budget outside of farm policy that have not yet contributed to deficit reduction yet comprise a significant share of the Federal budget. This is also why I would urge lawmakers to reject cuts to U.S. farm policy that would exceed the level specified by the House and Senate Agriculture Committee Chairs and Ranking Members in their letter to the Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction last fall.

2008 Farm Bill Review

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the Farm Bill) continued the traditional mix of policies consisting of the non-recourse marketing loan, loan deficiency payments, and the direct and countercyclical payments. The farm bill also included the addition of Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) as an alternative to counter cyclical payments for producers who agree to a reduction in direct payments and marketing loan benefits. The bill also added Supplemental Revenue Assurance (SURE) as a standing disaster assistance supplement to Federal crop insurance.

The 2008 Farm Bill made very substantial changes to the payment eligibility provisions, establishing an aggressive adjusted gross income (AGI) means test and, albeit unintended by Congress, resulting in the very significant tightening of "actively engaged" requirements for eligibility. USDA was still in the process of implementing many of the provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill in 2010, and the final payment eligibility rules were only announced in January of that same year, a mere 2 years ago. As a consequence, we are still adjusting to the many changes contained in the current farm bill, even as Congress considers the 2012 Farm Bill.

Regarding ACRE and SURE, frankly, neither policy has proved much value to rice farmers. Specifically, in the first year of ACRE signup, only eight rice farms representing less than 900 acres were enrolled nationwide. With changes, this revenue program may provide more value for some rice growing regions like California. And SURE has provided little, if any, assistance to rice producers, including those producers in the Mid-South who suffered significant monetary losses in 2009 due to heavy rains and flooding occurring prior to and during harvest, or the significant losses last year as a result of spring flooding in the Mid-South. SURE's inability to provide disaster assistance for such catastrophic events further highlights the continuing gap in available programs designed to help producers manage or alleviate their risk.

Regarding the traditional mix of farm policies, the nonrecourse marketing loan, loan deficiency payment, and countercyclical payments have not yet provided payments to rice farmers under the 2008 Farm Bill. The new price paradigm has, as a practical matter, greatly limited the protections afforded to producers under these farm policy features. In fact, if the protections provided were ever to trigger for rice farmers, the protections would help stem some of the economic losses but, frankly, not enough to keep most rice farms in business

through even a single year of severely low market prices.

As such, whatever its imperfections, the Direct Payment alone has assisted rice producers in meeting the ongoing and serious price and production perils of farming today.

For rice producers, as for most other producers, the existing levels of price protection have simply not kept pace with the significant increases in production costs, costs such as energy and fertilizer that are exacerbated by escalating government regulations. It is for this reason that rice farmers believe strengthening farm policies in the 2012 Farm Bill would be helpful in ensuring that producers have the ability to adequately manage their risks and access needed credit.

Crop Insurance

Risk management products offered under Federal Crop Insurance have been of very limited value to rice producers to date due to a number of factors, including artificially depressed actual production history (APH) guarantees, which I understand is also a problem for many other producers; high premium costs for a relatively small insurance guarantee; and the fact that the risks associated with rice production are unique from the risks of producing many other major crops.

For example, since rice is a flood-irrigated crop, drought conditions rarely result in significant yield losses as growers simply pump additional irrigation water to maintain moisture levels to achieve relatively stable yields. However, drought conditions do result in very substantial production cost increases as a result of pumping additional water. As such, what rice farmers need from Federal crop insurance are products that will help protect against increased production and input costs, particularly for energy and energy-related inputs. For example, fuel, fertilizer, and other energy related inputs represent about 70 percent of total variable costs.

In this vein, many in the rice industry have been working for over the past 4 years now to develop a new generation of crop insurance products that might provide more meaningful risk management tools for rice producers in protecting against sharp, upward spikes in input costs. I serve on a rice industry task force that has been working to develop and improve crop insurance products for rice, and although the objective was to gain approval from the Risk Management Agency (RMA) of at least two new products that could be available to growers in time for the 2012 crop year, this has not materialized. But, it is important to stress that even if these products had become available this year, we do not believe that they would have put rice producers anywhere near on par with other crops in terms of the relevance that crop insurance has as a risk management tool.

As such, rice producers enter the 2012 Farm Bill debate at a very serious disadvantage, having only a single farm policy that effectively works and that farm policy being singled out for elimination.

2012 Farm Bill

With the foregoing as a backdrop, the U.S. rice industry developed a set of farm policy priorities in September of last year to guide us during consideration of the 2012 Farm Bill. The U.S. rice industry is unified in its firm belief that farm policy designed to support a strong and dynamic U.S. agriculture sector is absolutely vital. We also believe that the planting flexibility provided under the 1996 Farm Bill and the countercyclical policies that have been in place for more than a decade now have served this nation and its farmers well. In particular, as we noted earlier, the 1996 Farm Bill's Direct Payments have provided critical help to rice farmers--offering capital farmers could tailor to their unique needs. We are very proud to stand by this farm policy.

However, given budget pressures and other considerations facing Congress that have caused policymakers to consider altering this approach in favor of more directed and conditioned assistance, we developed the following priorities:

First, we believe the triggering mechanism for assistance should be updated to provide tailored and reliable help should commodity prices decline below today's production costs, and should include a floor or reference price to protect in multi-year low price scenarios.

Second, as payments would only be made in loss situations, payment limits and means tests for producers should be eliminated.

Third, Federal crop insurance should be improved to provide more effective risk management for rice in all production regions, beginning with the policy development process.

More specifically relative to each of these points, we believe that:

Price Protection is a Must

Given price volatility for rice is the primary risk producers face that they do not have other good means of protecting against, with price fluctuations largely driven by global supply and demand; given rice is one of the most protected and sensitive global commodities in trade negotiations, thus limiting access to a number of key markets; given costs of production have risen to a point where the current \$6.50 (loan rate)/\$10.50 (target price) assistance triggers are largely irrelevant, we believe the first priority should be to concentrate on increasing the prices or revenue levels at which farm policy would trigger so that it is actually meaningful to producers, and would reliably trigger should prices decline sharply.

The reference price for rice should be increased to \$13.98/cwt (\$6.30/bu). This level would more closely reflect the significant increases in production costs for rice. And we believe this reference price should be a component of both the price-loss policy and the revenue-loss policy to ensure downside price protection.

Options for Different Production Regions

In addition, there should be true options for producers that recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach to farm policy does not work effectively for all crops or even the same crop such as rice in different production regions.

In the Mid-South and Gulf Coast production regions, a price-based loss policy is viewed as being most effective in meeting the risk management needs of producers. Specifically, this policy should include a price protection level that is more relevant to current cost of production; paid on planted acres or percentage of planted acres; paid on more current yields; and take into account the lack of effective crop insurance policies for rice.

In the California production region, although the existing revenue-based policy still does not provide effective risk management, efforts to analyze modifications which will increase its effectiveness continue. Since rice yields are highly correlated between the farm, county, crop reporting district, and state levels, we believe the revenue plan should be administered for rice at either the county or crop reporting district level to reflect this situation rather than lowering guarantee levels to use farm level yields. By setting loss triggers that reflect local marketing conditions, delivering support sooner, and strengthening revenue guarantees that account for higher production costs as well as the absence of effective crop insurance, California rice producers are hopeful that an effective revenue program can be developed.

While I have focused on the need for a choice for rice producers in different regions, this also applies for producers of most other grains. I support having policy options available for corn, soybeans, and wheat, which I produce, and believe that both a price-based policy and a revenue-based policy should be offered as options for these crops.

Whatever is done should be plain and bankable. The current SURE has too many factors and is not tailored to the multiple business risks producers face--it is not plain. The current ACRE, while offering improved revenue-based protection, is complicated by requiring two loss triggers; providing payments nearly 2 years after a loss; and provides no minimum price protection--it is not bankable. The marketing loan and target prices are plain and bankable--unfortunately the trigger prices are no longer relevant to current costs and prices.

Whatever is done should be tailored and defensible. We believe it makes sense to provide assistance when factors beyond the producer's control create losses for producers. We generally think more tailored farm policies are more defensible. For this reason, we like the thought of updating bases and yields or applying farm policies to planted acres/current production and their triggering based on prices or revenue, depending on the option a producer chooses. However, policy choices should not result in severe regional distortions in commodity policy budget baselines from which reauthorized commodity policies must be developed.

Whatever is done should be built to withstand a multi-year low price scenario. Whether in a revenue-based plan, or a price-based plan, reference prices should protect producer income in a relevant way in the event of a series of low price years. Ideally, this minimum could move upward over time should production costs also increase, this being of particular concern in the current regulatory environment.

Whatever is done should not dictate or distort planting decisions. Direct payments are excellent in this regard. SURE or similar whole farm aggregations tend to discourage diversification, which could be a problem for crops like rice. Any commodity specific farm policy that is tied to planted acres must be designed with extreme care so as to not create payment scenarios that incentivize farmers to plant for a farm policy. Whatever is done should accommodate history and economics and allow for proportional reductions to the baseline among commodities.

Some commodities are currently more reliant on countercyclical farm policies (ACRE/CCP) while others are receiving only Direct Payments in the baseline. Generally, the least disruptive and fairest way to achieve savings across commodities would be to apply a percentage reduction to each commodity baseline and restructure any new policy within the reduced baseline amounts.

There have been concerns raised about higher reference prices distorting planting decisions and resulting in significant acreage shifts including for rice. We are unaware of any analysis that shows significant acreage shifts resulting from the reference price levels included in the 2011 Farm Bill package. In fact, for rice specifically, a reference price of \$13.98/cwt that is paid on historic CCP payment yields and on 85% of planted acres results in a reference price level well below our average cost of production, so I find it hard to imagine why someone would plant simply due to this policy given these levels.

Pay Limits/Eligibility Tests Should Be Eliminated

The likely outcome of new farm policy is that it will provide less certainty for the producer (a likely decrease or elimination of Direct Payments). Since it will likely be designed to provide assistance only in loss situations, the second priority is that the policy should not be limited based on arbitrary dollar limits. Assistance should be tailored to the size of loss. A producer should not be precluded from participating in a farm policy because of past income experience. Any internal limits on assistance should be percentage-based (i.e., 25% of an expected crop value) and not discriminate based on the size of farm.

Crop Insurance Should Be Maintained and Improved

Although crop insurance does not currently work as well for rice as it does for other crops, the third priority would be to improve availability and effectiveness of crop insurance for rice as an available option. I would also support improvement to the product development processes (we have struggled with two 508(h) submissions for over 4 years and are still not completed with the process), and to the APH system such that any farmer's insurable yield (pre-deductible) would be reflective of what that farmer actually expects to produce. In no case should the crop insurance tools, which are purchased by the producer, be encumbered with environmental/conservation regulation or other conditions that fall outside the scope of insurance.

2011 Budget Control Act Efforts

Although the details of the 2011 Farm Bill package that was prepared by the House and Senate Agriculture Committees in response to the Budget Control Act were not disclosed, based on discussions and reports we believe that that package at least represents a good framework on which to build the 2012 Farm Bill. The 2011 package included a choice of risk management tools that producers can tailor to the risks on their own farms, providing under each of those options more meaningful price protection that is actually relevant to today's production costs and prices. It also included provisions to improve crop insurance and expedite product development for under-served crops such as rice.

We are concerned that effective support for rice producers under the price-based option was set well below cost of production that late changes to the revenue-based option minimized its potential as an effective risk management tool for rice producers, and that pay limits and AGI rules would still serve as an arbitrary constraint upon U.S. competitiveness, globally. Still, even with these areas for improvement, the U.S. rice industry very much appreciates the Members and staff who put enormous time and effort into what we believe represents a good blue print for ongoing farm bill deliberations and we thank you.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to offer my testimony. We certainly look forward to working with you on an effective 2012 Farm Bill we can all be proud of.

The Chairman. Thank you very much. And thank you in particular for the kind comments about the October-November discussion. Apparently not everybody in America quite agrees with that, but thank you.

Mr. Adams, you can begin whenever you are ready, sir.

STATEMENT OF CRAIG ADAMS, CORN, SOYBEAN, WHEAT, HAY, AND BEEF PRODUCER, LEESBURG, OH

Mr. Adams. Chairman Lucas and Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing on U.S. farm policy and the formulation of the farm bill.

I am Craig Adams, and my family has been in production agriculture starting as sharecroppers for at least four generations in southern Ohio, and have grown our business to 1,700 acres, of which 900 are owned. We have a diversified operation raising corn, soybeans, wheat, hay, pasture,

commercial beef cows, and kids. My wife is an educator and we have three children still in school.

Because of the 1980s farm crisis, poor yields, 18 percent interest and no functional crop insurance, I am the only Wilmington College agriculture graduate of 1979 still engaged in full time production. All of us who started farming in this time frame are survivors of or near bankruptcy. Without the 1985 Farm Bill and a community bank that believed in young men with dreams, I would not be here today.

With high commodity prices and an over-extended Federal budget, there is a push to eliminate or substantially reduce government support of agriculture. I believe everyone receiving Federal USDA dollars should share equally in reductions. During the late 1990s, there was a public outcry over Congressionally approved crop disaster payments.

Crop insurance in its current form is the most effective answer to short crop years. Any producer who desires an effective risk management tool can purchase crop insurance. Agriculture will accept reductions in FSA programs for crop insurance to survive. Independent companies servicing independent agents who dispense advice to farmers using 30 to 40 year historic yield databases to get true production patterns, not weather fluctuations, helping mitigate premium increases stemming from catastrophic loss. We need an insurance program that is affordable to all producers across the United States.

Commodity markets are cyclical and our self-produced food is a national asset. If all risk is removed I fear some of the unintended consequences could be the loss of affordable insurance for U.S. farmers.

Spring is the time of renewal, with baby animals entering the world and crops peaking through the warm soil seeking the sun's energy. Be like a farmer, Chairman Lucas, and nurture this farm bill to passage.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Adams follows:]

Prepared Statement of Craig Adams, Corn, Soybean, Wheat, Hay, and Beef
Producer, Leesburg, OH

Chairman Lucas, Congressman Peterson, and Members of the Committee thank you for holding this hearing on the future of U.S. farm policy and the formulation of the 2012 Farm Bill.

I am Craig Adams, and my family has been in production agriculture starting as sharecroppers for at least four generations in southern Ohio and have grown our business to 1,700 acres of which 900 are owned. We have a diversified operation raising corn, soybeans, wheat, hay, pasture, commercial beef cows, and kids. My wife Kim is an educator with a master in curriculum supervision. We have two children in college and one in middle school.

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With high commodity prices and an over extended Federal budget, there is a push to eliminate or substantially reduce government support of agriculture. I believe everyone receiving Federal USDA dollars should share equally in reductions. During the late 1990's there was public outcry over Congressionally approved crop disaster payments. Crop insurance in its current form is the most effective answer to short crop years. Any producer who desires an effective risk management tool can purchase crop insurance. Agriculture will accept reductions in FSA programs for crop insurance to survive. Independent company's servicing independent agents whom dispense advice to farmers using 30-40 year historic yield databases to get true production patterns, not weather fluctuations, helping mitigate premium increases stemming from catastrophic loss. We need an insurance program that's affordable to all crop producers across the U.S. Commodity markets are cyclical and our self-produced food is a national asset. If all risk is removed via shallow loss I fear the unintended consequence could be the loss of affordable insurance.

Spring is the time of renewal, with baby animals entering the world and crops peaking through the warm soil seeking the sun's energy. Be like a farmer Chairman Lucas and nurture our farm bill to passage.

Thank you,

Craig Adams.

The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Adams.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes and I would start by observing, Mr. Erickson, I promise you in the House of Representatives all spending is going down this year. And that is part of the challenge we face on this Committee, whether we have \$23 billion less or \$33 billion less or \$40+ billion less to spend when we put that next 5 year farm bill together, that is one of the challenges that we face.

I have a question though, being an old wheat and cattle guy from western Oklahoma, that I have to ask the panel. And my colleagues are always tired of this after awhile. But tell me in a snapshot, what are land prices doing in your core areas, the last 2, 3, 4 years? Up, down, sideways, stable?

Mr. Erickson. Dramatically higher and not all driven by agricultural prices, but in fact you have to look at the larger picture of the economy and lack of investment opportunities for those people who have been conservative in their approach to their personal finances invested into their future and now have the opportunity to invest into something larger at a rate of return that is better than they can find at the local bank.

So I think it is driven perhaps more by the opportunity to invest and some current tax laws than it is by its ability to pay for itself as farmland, that is for sure.

The Chairman. I see the exact same thing at home, 10 years ago, 5 years ago, it was to have a place to go hide on the weekends or a place to hunt. Now it is a safe place to put your money.

Ms. Moore, your area.

Ms. Moore. A few months ago there was some land that sold in the Roseville area and it was \$12,000 an acre and a farmer bought it. No, that does not cash flow but---

The Chairman. No.

Ms. Moore.--as Mr. Erickson said, it is an investment. At \$12,000 an acre, that is a big investment.

The Chairman. Exactly.

Mr. Mages.

Mr. Mages. Mr. Chairman, in our area in Minnesota, I am in central Minnesota and there has been land sales in the \$5,000 to \$6,000 range, which seems like a bargain compared to Illinois evidently. But some land in Minnesota is a few thousand dollars higher, but it is driven by the farmer basically. You know, years ago, it was a 1031 exchange that drove the land sales and today it is the farmer and for the reasons like Mr. Erickson said also. They look at it as a place to put their money because the return in the bank or whatever is a lot lower.

Thank you.

Mr. Gerard. And in southern Illinois, we are seeing the exact same thing, rapid escalation in land prices from both the investor and from the farmer. Not too many years ago, we were buying land for \$2,000 to \$3,000 an acre in our area and 2 weeks ago, we had one 10 miles up the road that sold for \$7,700 an acre, which is phenomenal for Alexander County, Illinois. So same story.

The Chairman. Mr. Adams.

Mr. Adams. Mr. Chairman, I must be living in a depressed part of the world. I jokingly say we can look out our back door and see Appalachia and we can look north about four counties and see the Corn Belt. Our prices have generally increased in southern Ohio. Two weeks ago, I had a friend purchased a farm for \$3,400 an acre, about 95 percent tillable, had not been farmed for several years. It is in that mid to low \$3,000 to \$3,700-\$3,800 an acre in southern Ohio. Now you go two counties to north central Ohio and you are talking \$5,000 to \$7,000 an acre for crop ground.

The Chairman. You have to remember, being an Okie, I live between my friends in Texas and my friends in Kansas, so I see--we will not flatter them at this moment here.

[Laughter.]

Mr. Boswell. Mr. Chairman, will you yield a moment?

The Chairman. I would yield to Mr. Boswell for a moment.

Mr. Boswell. What do you suppose you and I would do, you have your ranch down there, if we were cow/calf operators, some crops, if somebody wanted to come to your place or mine and offer us \$10,000 or \$12,000, we would probably say come on in, let us talk.

The Chairman. Then my wife would take me aside and explain to me why I could not do that, Leonard; yes, exactly. But yes, absolutely.

Another question. One of the topics of great discussion as we work on options in the next farm bill, as we try to craft

this concept of insurance, both revenue and traditional weather, yield issues, and we take into consideration all the other factors that drive farm policy. You are a very diverse group of farmers obviously.

Tell me, when you make your decisions about what to plant, how much of it is soil and past growing history, how much of it is what the insurance rates are, how much of it is what kind of demand the Renewable Fuel Standard creates? Tell me about how you make your decisions in your diverse operations, about what to produce. And as Chairman, that light is yellow, but you can go a little longer with me. Whoever is brave, step up.

Mr. Mages. Mr. Chairman, the way we do it, I guess basically we are corn and soybeans and it is economics. We plant about $\frac{2}{3}$ corn and $\frac{1}{3}$ soybeans and we do that on a rotational basis. It seems to work out pretty well, so that is one of the reasons. And the corn, we seem to make a little more money on corn and the risk is a little bit less on corn for some reason, weather risk in our area. Soybeans tend to have issues with high alkaline soils and things like that. So that is what makes our decision.

Mr. Erickson. We have a corn and soybean rotation and we look at our business from a holistic approach. Not only does the rotation provide for we think better opportunities for revenue generation, but we also think it allows us to manage risks, both from weather, diseases, other pests that might attack the crop. So we tend to look at a long-range approach there and have the opportunity with long-term landlord relationships to keep those in place. So we make our decisions based on what works best for our operation and the signals in the marketplace tells us.

Mr. Adams. Mr. Chairman, we raise basically a 50/50 ratio of corn and soybeans. Back in 2008 when corn prices took off upward, we messed up our rotation and when the end of the year was over, soybean acres had been purchased up similar to what they are doing right now, should have stayed with what we are. Wheat is not competitive in that kind of a rotation. We do some different things because of the cow/calf operation, things like that for forage. But the wheat is basically a conservation tool and it also allows us to rebuild waterways, terraces and things like that.

Mr. Gerard. Mr. Chairman, where I farm, we have variable soil types, so I guess the primary, the first consideration is soil type. We have some soils that are solely suited for rice where we cannot really rotate, it is continuous rice production. We have other soils where we can rotate rice and soybeans. And then on the third soil type, we can rotate corn, wheat, soybeans. We have much more flexibility. So on those acres that we do have flexibility, the first thing I look at is what is going to reap me the best net income and the market will dictate what we plant on those acres. Fortunately we have that flexibility.

One thing that really is irrelevant to my consideration is the safety net that is provided based on the target price or loan rates because what was proposed last fall is support to help keep us in business, but still yet, it is below cost of production. So there is no influence from the safety net or target price proposed, has really no bearing on what I am going to plant. Crop insurance the same.

The Chairman. So basically what you are telling me is what I have always known and what I have tried to explain to my colleagues back east; and that is, a typical farmer has to be an outstanding agricultural economist and calculate all these things every time to survive, and also a pretty darn good soil scientist based on his or her property and property history.

Thank you very much. I now recognize my friend from Iowa for 5 minutes, Mr. Boswell.

Mr. Boswell. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the dialogue you just had, that was helpful.

There is quite a lot of concern, as the Chairman mentioned, about the adjustments we will have to make, and I want you to understand and appreciate that his and our colleagues' worked, we tried to have that super committee action before the last holiday and it did not happen. But I think you need to know that of all the committees that were asked to bring their resolve to that super committee, the one that succeeded was the Agriculture Committee. So back to that whole comment about bipartisanship, we feel good about that.

We talked for some time about how we will step up and take a hard look at what we can--set our priorities. We know we will have to make an adjustment. We would like to do it, you would

like to do it rather than having somebody sitting at a desk in some far away place deciding for you. So I am very appreciative and complimentary that we came up with that \$23 billion. That is a lot.

But then I think it is fair, we have to talk about some of this. Now the rest of you step up to the plate and do your part before you come back to us. There is a lot of discussion, lot of concern. I am an old soldier, I spent a career in the military and I am lucky to be here, very lucky. And I am big on defense, but when we have a Secretary of Defense stand up and say we might need to make some adjustments here. And I am on the Eisenhower Commission which is setting up the memorial, I was asked to do that some years ago and it is not an easy thing to do. You might see something on the news on it.

But I made a comment some years ago about the military industrial complex and what it might do to us and I think we are faced with some of that. You are going to hear a lot of debate on this and I just want you to know a little bit of background. Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Peterson, and Ms. Stabenow and Pat Roberts over in the Senate side stepped up to the plate and so we have to deal with that. So you will hear a lot about it and things will be discussed on that probably, if you just stop and think about it, it will probably end up going to a conference committee and be worked out there. So I just want to say this to you so you know that this debate is going to take place and it will probably be fairly lively.

Having said that, if you want to comment, fine, but I am a big advocate for alternative fuels and have been for a long, long time. I was still in uniform years ago on a NATO assignment when we had the 7 day war and the big fuel crisis and I was in a foreign country. Amazed me what people just like us will do if you cannot get fuel for your car, your delivery truck or your tractor. It is amazing. So I have really been engaged in alternative fuels--all the above. And I have really been enthused about what we can grow out of the ground and turn into fuel and turn around and grow it again next year and so on.

Seeing what we have done in production yields and so on in our lifetime, I guess I am the oldest one on the panel up here. I am not waving that flag, but I remember when I came back from the Army, I had been gone for 20+ years, came back and I was so anxious to get into row crops and I was getting ready to plant and my father came out and he dug around down the row and he said, "How much are you planting, what kind of seed count?" And I do not remember what it was. He said, "You cannot do that, you cannot do that." And I told him why I thought I could and so on. So we watched it very close and I did not want to spend a lot of time on it, then he came back and crawled up on the combine when the harvest was going on and of course it was coming out pretty full and he said, "How much is this yielding?" We did not have the fancy gadgets we have now but I said, "It is probably about 125 to 135 bushels to the acre, probably." I said, "Why don't you just go into the elevator, it is all going across the scales, just go in there, we just finished that 80 over there, and check it." So he was gone quite a bit and he come back and he said, "It is making that." He just shook his head.

But look what we can do now. Look what some of you have done. So I do not know this question about, can the livestock sector exist with us doing a successful domestic ethanol industry, for example? I would like to hear your comments on that, just briefly, anybody and everybody. Can we do this?

Mr. Erickson. I think so.

Mr. Boswell. And I will tell you what I think when we get to the end. Go ahead.

Mr. Erickson. Thank you. I think that we can and we have demonstrated that we have been able to thus far. Our ability to increase yields without sacrificing soil loss or nutrient mismanagement, I will call it. We also have to recognize the key role that alternative fuel production plays in providing feedstocks for livestock. We must have a strong livestock industry here at home. Not only does it provide excellent food for our own people, but we are able to add value by processing those things locally.

But I think the alternative fuels market has also provided us the opportunity to provide feedstocks at a lower cost. Today's DDG provide a big percentage of rations for hog operations, swine diets and have significantly reduced the cost of just corn base. When you are looking at \$6+ corn, the DDG provides a very economical alternative to the diet for swine.

So I think we have been able to accomplish both.

Mr. Mages. Congressman, I think it is a very workable system. You know, in the past 10 years, the demand for ethanol has increased dramatically, ten percent of the nation's fuel basically is ethanol now. And with that 14 billion gallons of ethanol being produced, it comes from approximately 5 billion bushels of corn, but we are raising a tremendously larger amount of corn than we did in the past and on the same amount of land. And we are also doing it with using less fertilizer and we are doing it in a fashion that is very friendly, environmentally friendly to the land.

So I think the future of ethanol looks bright. I think with the livestock sector they are still a big customer, one of the biggest customers and through the DDGs and through the livestock, the value-added livestock, but also we get the nutrients from the livestock to put back on the land. And it is a tremendous circle of economic success.

Mr. Boswell. In respect to the rest of the Members, I am going to stop here, maybe we can come back to it later, but that little red light means I have used up my time for this round.

But I think we can too and I appreciate it. Just nod your head, do you think we can do it? Or shake your head this way-- okay, we think we can do it.

I want the rest of you to know, media and so on, we feel like we can do this. We can continue to take steps to get out of bondage to OPEC and so on. So anyway, so much for that. I just wanted to see what you thought about it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired.

I now recognize the gentleman from Texas, who I would note for the record has even fewer trees than I have in my district in Oklahoma, Mr. Conaway.

Mr. Conaway. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is good to be here. We measure our rain in hundredths of inches and we are proud to get $\frac{5}{100}$ of an inch from time to time. Thank you all for being here this morning.

I chair the Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management and while things that are going on at the CFTC are not directly related to what we are going to do these coming months in this farm bill, Ms. Moore, you mentioned that you bought your inputs last year for the 2012 crop.

Can you walk me through basically how you did that and the rest of you, have you seen yet impacts of the CFTC's rulemaking on your ability to do that at a price that makes sense for you?

Ms. Moore. Even before we finish our harvest, our seed salesmen are at our door trying to get our order for next year because seed is at such a premium for certain seed numbers, that if we can use those seed numbers, we really have to book them. We have the option of paying for them, but of course, it is at a reduced rate if we pay for it earlier than if we pay for it later next fall.

Mr. Conaway. Okay, so you are not using futures contracts, you are actually buying them directly from the----

Ms. Moore. We buy our seed.

Fertilizer costs, most of the time they are predicting they are going up so we will book and pay for our fertilizer.

Mr. Conaway. And how do you do that?

Ms. Moore. Through our local co-op.

Mr. Conaway. Okay, so you are relying on the co-op to be able to provide those services to you?

Ms. Moore. Yes.

Mr. Conaway. Have they talked to you about increased prices? Do any of the rest of you use futures markets to hedge?

Mr. Mages. Yes, I do, Congressman.

Mr. Conaway. Are you seeing anything yet from the impact of the rulemaking on the CFTC?

Mr. Mages. I am not familiar with that.

Mr. Conaway. Okay.

Department of Labor has recently stepped into your business with respect to, I will not call them children, but young people working on farms. Where should those decisions be made about how do you regulate, how do you take responsibility for children working on farms?

And maybe help us understand how old were you when you first started meaningfully working on your properties.

Mr. Erickson. I am not sure how meaningful it was, but I am a graduate of a half day kindergarten and I know after a half day kindergarten, I used to sit on the tractor and I thought I was driving, but I think it was a way to keep me occupied while

my dad fed hay to the cows.

I think that the problem with some of these--and I alluded to it in my written testimony--the problem with some of these regulations is they appear before they are thought through. And if given the opportunity for people who have an understanding, beginning in Congress like the gentlemen before us today, if this Committee had had an opportunity to comment on some of those regulations before they had been introduced, I am sure that you would have been able to shed light to those regulatory agencies to say, hey, I think you need more information here.

It is important to keep young people safe in working on the farm, but it is also important that we grow that work ethic in our young people and employer after employer will tell you the importance of that work ethic in young people today. And I think that is what makes us such a good workforce in the Midwest.

Mr. Conaway. Ms. Moore.

Ms. Moore. I think the responsibility should be with the parents. My husband told me when he was 8, he started raking hay and doing that. And when our oldest son was 8, I looked at him and said, "Do you really think Steve is ready?" And he agreed that no, maybe at that time he was not ready. But our boys all worked on the farm just building fence or raking hay or doing whatever needed to be done, when it was age appropriate, and that was our decision. And I can tell you that when they went out to college or went looking for jobs and people found out that they grew up on a farm, their eyes kind of light up, like oh somebody who knows how to work. That has been a real plus. They come back and say, "Mom, they like that I grew up on a farm. You know, they think that I have learned how to work." And I think that we instill that in our children and I think that is really important.

Mr. Conaway. Yes, the struggle is going to be obviously you making a decision for your children to work on your farm.

Ms. Moore. Right.

Mr. Conaway. The restrictions should be different than someone who lives near and they are going to be using children who are not theirs, but still age appropriate. How do you put in place the protections that are appropriate but also allow the flexibility to children whose parents do not actually own the land or are actually farming, to be that labor in the summer time that they need to learn that work ethic.

Ms. Moore. Well, I think the parents of the children should have that.

Mr. Conaway. Sure.

Ms. Moore. So if they said yes, I think my child is mature enough and responsible enough to do that job on the farm, that they should have the ability to say yes.

Mr. Conaway. My experience was not on the farm but it was on a drilling rig. And I had the same experience, while I worked on a drilling rig as a roughneck, I did not really think with either one of my boys that was a good idea. So I mean, it was my decision, my call to make there.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The Chairman. I would simply note, like many people in this room, I started at a young age with my father and grandfather. And when I got to work for the neighbor as a teenager, that was wonderful, I got paid.

[Laughter.]

The Chairman. Wonderful.

I turn to the gentleman from Illinois for his 5 minutes.

Mr. Hultgren. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you all for being here. This has already been very informative.

I just want to briefly say, before I get started, it is such a privilege to be serving on the Agriculture Committee, thank you, Mr. Chairman. It has been such a great learning experience for me. My district is just east, it starts a little bit north of here in Henry County and then goes east all the way over to DuPage County. But great to be here today.

I also know, Congressman Schilling and I, it has been a wonderful little over a year that we have been serving out in Washington, D.C., but we also really appreciate the opportunity to work with our Senators here from Illinois. Specifically, I just want to recognize a couple of guys who are here from Senator Kirk's office, who just do a great job on ag policy--Rob Johnson and also Randy Pollard, along with Senator Kirk's ag advisory group is here as well. We got to meet with them for a few minutes before. So we all know Senator Kirk is doing great and we want him back in Washington quickly, and he is still passionate about serving people here in Illinois. So glad

you guys are here. But again, thank you all for being here.

A couple of quick questions and a lot of stuff has already been covered, but I wanted just to talk with Mr. Erickson briefly about exports. I was very excited with, as Congressman Schilling said, the passage of the free trade agreements. I wondered if you could talk more specifically how you would see that impacting your family farm.

Mr. Erickson. We have the advantage in this part of Illinois that we have a strong domestic demand for commodities and we also have the ability to export via river transportation. I will not even go into all that because that is a whole other topic.

But exports have clearly been a driving force. When I first started farming in 1985, I think we had the feeling generally that we could control production, and therefore, control price. In the meantime, our competitors decided that if they are not going to do it, we will. And I think that we have finally come around to the fact, quite some time ago, that competing in the global marketplace is what we are all about and we obviously need to work here at home first. Exports clearly provide a lot of opportunities, not only for the producers, but the developers of products, the value-added, the transportation industry, the construction industry, and the list goes on and on that supports those export markets.

Mr. Hultgren. Thanks. I agree with you as well. Along with serving on the Agriculture Committee, I also serve on the Transportation Committee and so I am really helping try to get a farm bill passed and also a surface transportation bill passed. I see how important our canals are, our rivers are, our roads are, our rails are. All of these are interconnected clearly and impact other industries, such as agriculture. So we need to make sure that we get some things done on the farm bill but also on the transportation bill.

Ms. Moore, I wondered if I could ask you briefly, you talked in your testimony about the difficulty of securing credit especially for new farmers. I wonder, how hard is it to get started, for a new farmer to get started these days in this economy? And do you have any suggestions that would help prospective farmers or things that we should keep in mind as we work on the 2012 Farm Bill?

Ms. Moore. Well, with the changes in the banking industry, for a new farmer to go in without much collateral, it is almost impossible for them to get the kind of money that we are talking about.

Several years ago, it might have been a little easier, but as costs have gone up, they need to borrow more and more to get started. If there is a program that would support a young farmer and back them and give them some security at hopefully a lower interest rate too. But it is mostly getting the collateral backing for that loan that really could be a stumbling block for a lot of producers to get started.

Mr. Hultgren. Mr. Gerard, in your testimony you said "If all risk is removed via shallow loss, I fear that the unintended consequences could be the loss of affordable insurance."

I wonder if you could elaborate on that possible unintended consequences and why you believe a shallow loss program would not be beneficial.

Mr. Adams. Congressman, I am sorry, but I think that was my testimony.

Mr. Hultgren. Was that yours? I am sorry.

Mr. Adams. My intent was on the shallow loss, I misstated, shallow loss or other changes in the insurance program that would increase cost to the farmer. The concern is that if you have an indemnity payment every year, then your premiums are going to go up. That was the concern.

Mr. Hultgren. Okay.

Mr. Adams. It is with the loss ratio. You know, do no harm, it is working right now, is the concept; yes.

Mr. Hultgren. Okay, thank you.

Real quickly if I could sneak one in. It just turned red.

Let me get back to Mr. Erickson real quickly. You talked about the importance of direct payments. We have also heard so much about the importance--maybe a greater importance--of crop insurance right now. Obviously, many would like to have both.

I wonder if quickly, if you could say is there a way that you could do without direct payments if crop insurance was strengthened?

Mr. Erickson. I think my testimony led us to discuss the fact that direct payments, while under attack for a number of

reasons currently, I think they were a good investment and I think my feeling has always been that you have to have personal responsibility for your own business and the things that you are responsible for. And I think the direct payments put the onus on the producer and the landowner to make sure that those payments were properly used and that those payments went to things that I outlined, which included risk management.

In our operation, we do not utilize Federal crop insurance. And the reason that we do not is that we have had the opportunity to become financially stable. We have used those direct payments as a way to do marketing programs that have reduced price risk and the premium and reward from the Federal crop insurance has not worked for us. That is not to say that it is not a good program and it does have a place in risk management. I was just hopefully shedding light on the fact that there is opportunity for flexibility for all of the program.

Mr. Hultgren. That is helpful. My time has expired. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired. We now turn to Mr. Schilling for his 5 minutes.

Mr. Schilling. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Erickson, it is interesting, you brought up a little bit about regulation and before I got going, I had a meeting with Senator Kirk's ag advisory board and I was telling them the story of how we had a meeting with Ms. Jackson, and it was kind of interesting because what happened was we were talking about the masks that they were trying to force the farmers to wear and one of my colleagues had asked, do you know how much they cost. And she says well, no, I do not. Are they \$50, are they \$500, are they \$5,000. And anyway, as this thing went on and on, it was both Democrats and Republicans alike that were kind of going after her and I was sitting there thinking--I was kind of feeling sorry for her and then I remembered that she was with the EPA.

[Laughter.]

Mr. Schilling. But one of the things that is really critical is that we all want clean air, clean water. And any time you come in and you try to get some of this over-regulation under control, you get attacked. And I think it is imperative when they are trying to regulate farm dust and things like that, we have really got to keep a good eye and keep this under control because those all end up being more inputs and cost to people that do not necessarily need to be there.

But what I wanted to start out, Mr. Erickson, do you think--I want to talk about crop insurance because that is the number one thing I continually hear as I go throughout the district. But do you think more parity in crop insurance premiums in Illinois would make you more likely to purchase crop insurance?

Mr. Erickson. Crop insurance is all about risk/reward, just like any insurance is. I would give full review to what the opportunities provided for our business and how it could potentially lay off risk, and what the potential reward was down the line. And I think that is the importance of keeping the flexibility in crop insurance in the mixture, that it is a sound program that does not become overly subsidized or overly regulated. If you try to fix it too much, you might actually hurt the parts that work the best for the majority of people.

So I am not being critical of the program, but I just think that it could be dangerous if we try to make too many changes there to fix everyone's problem, and in effect you have a costly program that maybe does not suit all at any cost.

Mr. Schilling. An unintended consequence basically.

Mr. Erickson. Yes.

Mr. Schilling. I have heard quite a bit about the re-rating issue from producers in the district who believe that the MRAs approach is just the beginning in addressing a long-standing rate issue here in Illinois. And basically would encourage the process to continue.

Five minutes goes so fast. I want to try to get to Ms. Moore here.

You mentioned too much emphasis on any single approach, which is great. So I am going to flip over to Ms. Moore.

In your testimony on risk management, you mentioned that you utilize the revenue assurance to protect against loss, which is basically what we talked about here, which I think is great. But one of the things that I think that you are doing a really awesome job on and I just want you to kind of touch on,

and I applaud your work here in Illinois with the Farm Families and your educational efforts on farm policy because I think that is something that is critical, that we can get outside of our farm communities and educate people.

Can you just highlight some of your most successful practices for us, Ms. Moore, on educating folks about the farm bill?

Ms. Moore. Well, probably the latest is Illinois Farm Families where we have sat down with mostly moms, we think that moms are the most influential, and sat down with them and answered their questions. And this month, we did a tour to a hog facility with them and while we are on the bus, we talk. So those are our times. And one of the questions was, "Tell me about farm subsidies." Well, that is all they hear, that is all they have in their mind about the farm bill, they did not understand all the titles that are involved. So I had the opportunity to explain to them everything that was encompassed in the farm bill and they said, "Oh, so it is more than just paying some money to farmers." So we did get that dialogue and they did understand how much of it is including the nutrition programs and the SNAP program and got them to see.

But every time I talk to consumers and they hear farm bill, oh, you mean subsidies. And that is all that they are hearing. So we need to do our part to let them know there is a lot more to this farm bill than just subsidies.

Mr. Schilling. Very good. You know, I appreciate that answer because part of our job on this Committee is to make really the strongest arguments for rural America I believe, and just the importance of the farm bill to our colleagues. We have a lot of colleagues who do not truly understand what is going on with ag.

I can see I am running out of time, but I really appreciate everyone being here. Thank you. I yield back, sir.

The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Schilling.

One last observation or one question. Mr. Boswell and I have been discussing a point up here and I would recognize him to make a quick inquiry of the panel on this policy point.

Mr. Boswell. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Something we are hearing some talk about as we talk about the Federal crop insurance and so on, is conservation compliance. A lot of talk across the country and a lot across my state, a lot of people think we are all flat, but you know, we have a lot of highly erodible ground and so on. I would like to hear your response, there is not too much land and it has to have some conservation practice put on it. So should this be something we should be considering as we talk about Federal crop insurance? Should the producers be required to be in compliance?

The Chairman. Should it be a mandatory requirement, that's the question back east. No not participating in the program if you are not vested in the conservation programs--not voluntary. There is a big difference there. Whoever, anybody.

Mr. Mages. Mr. Chairman, I think conservation compliance does not belong in crop insurance. I think crop insurance is something that we pay for part of it and, say you had a problem one year and you have a big crop insurance payment coming in, and for some reason they do a compliance check in the back 40 and you did something wrong years ago and you are out of compliance. And now the banker is waiting for his money or you are waiting to pay the bills and now they are going to refuse to pay. So for all of them reasons, I think compliance should not be an issue with crop insurance.

Mr. Erickson. I almost hate to say this. I would differ in the fact that I think regardless of how we feel about them as producers, subsidy or incentive that we are provided financially from the government may entitle us to fall within the framework of certain programs. In our scenario, we have done conservation programs without government funding, but that is not the case for everyone. If we want to provide subsidy in any regard, in my estimation, it may come at a cost. And I do think we have a responsibility to farm responsibly. I think the vast majority of farmers do. But I also can understand the need for programs to be designed so that there is a certain amount of accountability for those who want to participate.

That is a pretty wide area I guess.

Mr. Boswell. I think you both made valid remarks. And perhaps if we go into this and I am quite confident we are going to hear about it. And by the way, for whatever it is worth to you, the land I have stewardship over, I complied before we had all this set aside business and I did not--I had

already done it. That is beside the point.

I think some of our folks--we are back to we all have an investment in agriculture, whether you are in the city or wherever--are going to bring this up, so we might need some expertise, Mr. Chairman, if we get to that point on how to qualify or design it where it would---

The Chairman. Very valid point, Mr. Boswell, and this question takes us to the very core issue of what a farm bill is. When in a time that 75 percent of all farm bill spending in the last 5 years go to the social nutrition programs, some in my district refer to them as the feeding programs, perhaps when all the bills are added up for this year and last year, 80 percent of all farm bill spending will be the feeding programs. Is it still a farm bill when we become that small a portion. And by the same token, is the farm bill, part of the farm bill intended to help us meet the food and fiber needs of this country and the world, or is it a tool with which to compel us to follow other people's guidelines about how we should live on our land.

Those are all big philosophical discussions that will be sorted out on the floor or in the Committee and certainly on the floor of the United States House.

You look like, Mr. Adams, you have some insights to lay on us. You will get to finish this.

Mr. Adams. Well, Mr. Chairman, in response to Mr. Boswell, as a producer I would be willing to have linkage between crop insurance and conservation if recipients of food feeding programs would submit themselves to drug tests and things of that nature to be able to qualify.

[Applause.]

The Chairman. On that thought---

[Laughter.]

The Chairman.--the time for this panel has expired and we thank you for your insights.

And we now call our second panel of witnesses to the table.

[Brief pause.]

The Chairman. The hearing will return to order and I would like to thank all of not only our participants in the hearing today but the folks who are with us today and who may be observing this process, and remind you once again everyone can visit, and anyone can visit, the House Agriculture Committee website to learn more about the 2012 Farm Bill process. Additionally, anyone is welcome to submit comments to be considered as a part of the Committee farm bill field hearing record. Your comments must be submitted using the website address by May 20, 2012, so it can be incorporated in the permanent record. That address is agriculture.house.gov/farmbill.

With that, I would like to welcome our second panel of witnesses to the table. Mr. John Williams, sorghum, corn, wheat, and soybean producer from McLeansboro, Illinois; Mr. Gary Asay, pork, corn, and soybean producer, Osco, Illinois; Mr. Terry Davis, corn and soybean producer, Roseville, Illinois; Mr. David W. Howell, corn, soybean, pumpkin--pumpkin? This is going to be a good diverse topic--pumpkin, and tomato producer, Middletown, Indiana. By the way, my grandfather was born in Miami County, Indiana 113 years ago. And Ms. Jane Weber, specialty crop producer, Bettendorf, Iowa.

And as Chairman, you can offer comments as you go along, it is one of the privileges that are left.

Mr. Williams, please begin when you are ready.

STATEMENT OF JOHN WILLIAMS, SORGHUM, CORN, WHEAT, AND SOYBEAN PRODUCER, McLEANSBORO, IL

Mr. Williams. Good morning. I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to sit here before you today to discuss the impact of the next farm bill, and what it will have on our operation.

I farm at home with my mom, dad, my son, and my daughter in Hamilton and White Counties near McLeansboro, Illinois, where we grow grain sorghum, corn, wheat, and soybeans. Grain sorghum is an integral component in our rotation and is a crop I use as a foundation for defense. I am blessed geographically to be able to sell our grain sorghum at a premium of 30 to 70 over corn each year. It is less expensive to plant and is more resilient to varying weather conditions, whether they be wet or dry. It is a dependable crop and has been a staple on our farm now for four generations.

As a farmer, I realize the vast impact this one piece of

legislation has on our day-to-day operations, and I want to ensure farmers benefit from the next farm bill. So I applaud you for holding this hearing today, and thank you.

On our farm, I plan defensively and understand the upside and downside of risk. I have seen what can happen to friends and neighbors when they do not plant for risk, which underscores the need for meaningful risk management tools that farmers can utilize. With that said, I firmly believe that the number one goal for the next farm bill should be "do no harm" to Federal crop insurance.

I believe a personal T-yield system, which would allow a farmer's APH to more accurately reflect his yield potential, would be a more productive way to improve the APH.

I would also encourage RMA to include sorghum in the trend-adjusted yield pilot program. It is inequitable to allow competing crops to have trend-adjusted yields while sorghum farmers' APHs are left unadjusted.

Crop insurance is a safety net in a time of disaster. It is also an integral part of our overall marketing strategy. Because of revenue protection insurance, I can market aggressively and still be protected against market shifts. I remember having a glut of grain in the 1980s and I do not want to be caught in a position like that again where it affects our bottom line.

In the 1980s with high interest rates and low grain prices, our crop was worth less than it cost to produce it. While interest rates are not the problem today, the cost of basic farm inputs has skyrocketed over the last 2 years. That is why it is critical to have some protection in the next farm bill against a steep drop in commodity prices, since input prices are sticky and slow to follow declining commodity prices.

Whether that protection is a reference price system or a revenue-based system, it is important that it be in the new farm bill safety net and farmers have the option to choose what fits their operation and risk appetite the best. In a revenue-based program, it is critical to have a reference price and plug yields. The reference price will protect against a long-term, large commodity price drop and plug yields will help in times of consecutive years of yield losses.

As for ACRE and SURE, these programs are not widely used in our area because they are too complex. I would have rather gone with a guaranteed route that direct payments provided. But given the situation, any new program that results from the next farm bill should be simple and transparent.

With that said, sorghum is an agronomically important crop to our farm and likewise to those in the Sorghum Belt. However, it is not always the primary crop for many farmers and is extraordinarily sensitive to any incentives that are created in the farm program. No matter which form of policy is pursued, I believe special care must be taken to encourage crop diversity and to avoid a monoculture system that rejects agronomics in favor of farm policy incentives.

And finally, I support the continuation of a farm bill energy title. As I mentioned earlier in my testimony, I sell my grain sorghum at a premium by rail. The market is limited to my area but stands to improve by generating competition through the biofuels industry which already has created a positive economic impact in the High Plains area. This Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels from Section 9005 of the 2008 Farm Bill should be continued as it incentivizes eligible biofuel producers to use non-conventional feedstocks such as sorghum.

Thank you again and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Williams follows:]

Prepared Statement of John Williams, Sorghum, Corn, Wheat, and Soybean
Producer, McLeansboro, IL

Introduction

I would like to thank the House Committee on Agriculture for the opportunity to submit testimony on the next U.S. farm bill and its impact on my operation. I am honored to be here and be asked to present my views.

My name is John Williams. I farm with my father and son near McLeansboro, Illinois, in Hamilton and White Counties where we raise grain sorghum, corn, wheat and soybeans. Grain sorghum is a crop I use as a foundation for defense. It is less expensive to plant and much more adaptable to varying weather conditions. Grain sorghum has proven itself as an integral component in my rotation, providing a resilient, dependable crop each year on my third-generation family farm.

My partners and I appreciate the work put forth by this Committee in developing the next farm bill and look forward to working with the

Committee to craft this set of vital farm policy. Because it is an integral part of my operation, my testimony will focus on multiple areas of farm policy as they relate to sorghum's safety net.

Protect Federal Crop Insurance

On my operation, I plan defensively and understand the upside and downside of risk. I have seen what can happen to friends and neighbors when they do not plan for risk, underscoring the need for meaningful risk management tools that producers can utilize. Therefore, my first priority is to "do no harm" to Federal Crop Insurance, and I feel the program should be built upon in the following ways:

The APH methodology should be reformed and county T-yield system improved so as to reduce the impact of local weather phenomena and allow the producer's insurable yield (pre-deductible) to reflect what the producer and his lender would actually reasonably expect to produce in that year. I believe a personal T-yield system, which would allow a producer's APH to more accurately reflect his yield potential, would be a productive way to improve APH.

I would also support improvement to the product development processes so that there would be a clear pathway to bring new policies, like one for sweet sorghum or high biomass energy sorghum, to market.

In no case should the crop insurance tools, which are purchased by the producer, be weighed down with environmental regulation or other conditions that fall out of the scope of insurance.

I would encourage RMA to include sorghum in the trend adjusted yield pilot program. It is inequitable to allow competing crops to have trend adjusted yields while sorghum producers' APHs are left unadjusted.

2012 Farm Bill

Crop insurance is a safety net in a time of disaster but it also is an integral part of my overall marketing strategy. Because of revenue protection insurance, I can market aggressively and still be protected against market shifts. I remember having a glut of grain in the 1980s and I don't want to be caught in a position like that again where it affects my bottom line.

In the 1980s, with high interest rates and low grain prices, my crop was worth less than it cost to produce it. While interest rates are not the problem today, the cost of basic inputs has skyrocketed over the last 2 years. That is why it is critical to have some protection in the next farm bill against a steep drop in commodity prices; I know input prices are sticky and slow to follow declining commodity prices.

Whether that protection is a reference price system or a revenue based system, it is important that it be in the farm bill safety net and producers have the option to choose what fits their operation and risk appetite the best. In a revenue based program, it is critical to have a reference price and plug yields. The reference price will protect against a large commodity price drop and plug yields will help in times of consecutive years of yield loss.

With that said, sorghum is an agronomically important crop to my farm and likewise to those in the Sorghum Belt. However, it's not always the primary crop for many producers, and is extraordinarily sensitive to any incentives that are created in the farm program. No matter which form of policy is pursued, special care must be taken to encourage crop diversity and rotation on the farm and avoid a monoculture system which rejects agronomics in favor of farm policy incentives. Based on both experience and a producer's understanding of the program, I suggest the following:

A farm bill should not dictate or distort planting decisions. Direct payments are excellent in this regard. SURE or similar whole farm aggregations tend to discourage diversification, which could be problematic for sorghum. Any commodity specific program that is tied to planted acres must be designed with extreme care to avoid creating payment scenarios that incentivize farmers to plant crops with higher inherent value to maximize payments rather than making the wisest possible agronomic decisions.

A program should be simple and bankable. The recently expired SURE program had too many factors and was not tailored to the multiple business risks producers face--it was not simple. The current ACRE, while offering improved price-based protection, is based on the state's income, not the farm's--it

is not bankable, especially in some of the large states where sorghum thrives. The current loan and counter cyclical programs are simple and bankable--unfortunately the 2008 price levels are no longer relevant given current production costs. It is important to me to have a simple, bankable program to take to my lender, should disaster strike my crop.

A farm bill should be targeted and defensible. It makes sense to provide assistance when factors beyond the producers' control create losses.

A farm bill should be built to withstand a multi-year low price scenario. Whether in a revenue loss plan, or a price-based countercyclical plan, it will be important to have a set minimum price that serves as a floor or reference price to protect producer income in a relevant way in the event of a series of low price years. Ideally, this minimum could move upward over time should production costs also increase.

A farm bill should allow for transitional and fair reductions to the baseline for all crops. Generally, the least disruptive and most fair way to achieve savings across commodities would be to apply a percentage reduction to each commodity baseline and structure any new program within the reduced baseline amounts.

The sorghum industry has seen firsthand the impact farm policy can have on planting decisions made by producers.

Specifically evaluating certain revenue proposals, it seems that without yield plugs, in a situation with 2 consecutive years of loss, the protection quickly drops to a point where the program would have little value and would provide almost no protection for my farm. This component is necessary to ensure equity among crops because sorghum is grown in region with such high yield variability.

Additionally, a revenue policy in conjunction with the potential use of adjusted yields for certain commodities could eliminate the important element of risk involved in growing a crop. This would create a situation that would greatly distort planting intentions because a farmer may be inclined to plant for the largest revenue guarantee as opposed to the most prudent agronomic choice.

Finally, direct payments, while not necessarily tied to a specific crop being planted, have proven to be a WTO compliant, efficient payment for producers. It is one of the few parts of the current safety net bankers have certainty with and will provide financing for our producers. However, if the Committee decides to move away from this program, it makes it that much more important that successor policies be bankable.

Eliminate Dated Pay Limits

Given the likely possibility that a new farm program would have less certainty for the producer (a likely decrease or elimination of direct payments) and will therefore be designed to provide assistance only in loss situations, the program should not be limited based on arbitrary dollar limits, i.e., assistance should be tailored to the size of loss. A producer should not be precluded from participating in a farm program because of past income experience. Any internal program limits on assistance should be percentage-based (i.e., 25 percent of an expected crop value) and not discriminate based on the size of farm.

Build Incentives for Sorghum Production into Conservation and Energy Titles

Sorghum is a highly water efficient crop that works well in various rotation systems, spanning from southern Texas to South Dakota. It thrives in drought prone areas because, whereas other crops will die during a period of prolonged water stress, sorghum will become dormant and thrive again upon taking in moisture. And while I rarely experience prolonged drought myself, this ability to make a crop under highly water deficient conditions allows sorghum to fit easily into farms where water is becoming scarcer each year.

As such, it would be beneficial to strengthen the principles of water conservation language in the Ag Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) of the 2008 Farm Bill to more specifically encourage planting sorghum and other water saving crops. Currently, the program allows incentives for switching to lower water intensity crops, but a vast majority of payments are going to other projects. There is also place for water conservation language in existing Conservation Security Program (CSP) and Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) language, and water conservation options should be strengthened wherever practical. Using farm bill conservation programs as a transitional support, farmers will be able to economically justify switching higher value crops to lower water intensity crops over time.

Additionally, grain, sweet and high biomass forage sorghums are all

used to produce ethanol under economically viable biofuels technologies. I support the continuation of a farm bill energy title and specifically encourage continuing the Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels from Section 9005 of the 2008 Farm Bill. Section 9005 allows incentive payments to eligible biofuels producers that use non-conventional feedstocks, such as sorghum. It has had positive economic impact on the Sorghum Belt and served as a water savings incentive where aquifers are already depleted.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Asay, you may proceed whenever you are ready.

STATEMENT OF GARY ASAY, PORK, CORN, AND SOYBEAN PRODUCER, OSCO,
IL

Mr. Asay. Good morning, Chairman Lucas and Members of the Agriculture Committee. I am Gary Asay, a farmer from Osco, Illinois. Along with my wife, I farm 300 acres of corn and soybeans and raise about 9,000 hogs a year. I am licensed to sell crop insurance and Livestock Gross Margin insurance.

Like all pork producers, in the next farm bill, I would like to see provisions that help me maintain and strengthen my competitiveness. I do not want unwarranted and costly provisions that will make it harder for me to compete.

The U.S. pork industry would like Congress to address several issues in the next farm bill, including feed availability, comprehensive disease surveillance, new foreign market access, risk management, and government intervention into the markets. I want to focus my testimony on the latter two.

The U.S. pork industry has seen rapid growth in exports over the past decade. It is now exporting more than 25 percent of production. Because of that growth and an increased likelihood of a foreign animal disease outbreak in the U.S., the potential for a catastrophic drop in hog prices is greater than ever. Such a drop would adversely affect the U.S. economy which garners \$35 billion in GDP annually and 550,000 jobs for the U.S. pork industry. Producers need better risk management tools to protect their operations. USDA has such a tool, a program similar to the one for crop farmers called Livestock Gross Margin insurance. But it reaches far too few pork producers and covers too few hogs.

Congress and the USDA need to make funding and program changes so the program provides inexpensive catastrophic insurance coverage. Congress should remove the program's \$20 million cap, \$16 million of which is now used for the dairy industry and \$3 million is used for hogs. Also, USDA should lift the 30,000 head limit on the amount of hogs that can be insured. These limits are out of step with today's pork industry. Last year, only 206,000 hogs were covered. With the U.S. pork industry marketing more than 100 million hogs in a year, it is clear that the current LGM program affords very limited protection to U.S. pork producers. Congress should strongly urge USDA to work with pork producers to develop a catastrophic insurance product that is more in keeping with today's pork industry needs.

Another issue I would like to raise is government's intervention in the buying, selling, and raising animals and how that would adversely affect pork producers' competitiveness. Mandates, whether pushed by lawmakers or activists, must not stand in the way of market-based demands. I know some lawmakers continue to discuss banning packer ownership of livestock, eliminating forward contracts and limiting the number of hogs covered by a contract. I do not believe pork producers would be well-served by having Congress dictate or eliminate certain types of contracting mechanisms. Doing so would force the livestock industry to revert to an inefficient system used more than a half century ago.

Today's U.S. pork industry has a wide variety of marketing and pricing methods, including contracts to meet the challenging needs of a diverse marketplace. Economics should determine the structure of the pork production and processing. No economic research has ever shown that structure or marketing practices of the industry has harmed producers or consumers. Until such research exists, Congress should not impose limitations on packer ownership of production, producer ownership of packing or marketing contracts.

Likewise, Federal mandates on production practices, including ones that dictate animal housing, would add to producers' costs and weaken the competitiveness. That is why

pork producers oppose Egg Products Inspection Act Amendments, House Resolution 3798, which would dictate the size of cages for laying hens. The bill would amend the Federal food safety law. If imposed on imports, food safety laws must meet the World Trade Organization's equivalency principle, which requires countries to recognize each other's science-based measures as acceptable, even if they are different, as long as an equivalent level of protection is provided.

But the supporters of H.R. 3798 admit that the standards in the bill are arbitrary, they are not based on science that protects and improves food safety and public health. If imposed on imported eggs, they would not meet the World Trade Organization's equivalence principle.

For Congress to intervene in production practices for any livestock species with arbitrary standards devoid of scientific justification is extremely dangerous precedent for domestic and international commerce. The bottom line on the farm bill, Congress should craft legislation to help farmers like me remain competitive and should avoid provisions that make us less competitive.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Asay follows:]

Prepared Statement of Gary Asay, Pork, Corn, and Soybean Producer,
Osco, IL

Introduction

Gary Asay is a farmer from Osco, Ill. Along with his wife, he runs Asay Farms, which consists of 300 acres split between corn and soybeans. He also raises about 9,000 hogs a year for Cargill and is licensed to sell crop insurance and Livestock Gross Margin insurance.

He serves on the board of directors of the National Pork Producers Council, which is an association of 43 state pork producer organizations and is the voice in Washington for the nation's 67,000 pork producers.

Like all pork producers, in the next farm bill Asay would like to see provisions that help him maintain and strengthen his competitiveness vis-a-vis foreign competitors; he does not want in the bill unwarranted and costly provisions and regulations that will make it harder for him to compete in the global marketplace.

The Next Farm Bill

There are several issues pork producers believes Congress should address in the next farm bill that could help the U.S. pork industry and farmers like him.

1. Enhancing programs that keep feed grain prices competitive with the rest of the world would be very beneficial. Feed comprises 60-70 percent of my input cost of producing a market hog. (Each market pig consumes approximately 10.5 bushels of corn and 200 pounds of soybean meal--that's about 4 bushels of soybeans.) But the rapid development of the corn-based ethanol industry, together with other factors, is threatening the U.S. pork industry's competitiveness and the survivability of producers like me. The markets have rationalized demand for corn over time, but the potential for short-term dramatic price swings, as well as localized feed shortages, has jeopardized the industry's competitiveness and reliability as a domestic food supplier and as an exporter.

Following passage of the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA) of 2007, which included a Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS2) that quickly accelerated the mandated production of corn ethanol, pork producers struggled to adjust to rapidly escalating prices and increased volatility in grain markets. This resulted in a reduction in hog production. Congress allowed the long-standing tax subsidies for corn ethanol to expire at the end of last year. But the ethanol industry continues to seek further government support for expanding ethanol markets, calling for the blend rate to be increased from 10 to 15 percent ethanol in motor vehicle fuels, subsidies to finance construction of ethanol pipelines and other infrastructure and adjustments to the RFS2 that would allow corn ethanol to qualify as an advanced biofuel and expand its production mandate.

The debate over Federal renewable fuels policy has been playing out over continually increasing pressure on domestic and worldwide grain reserves. The 2011 crop, affected by weather conditions in various parts of the Corn Belt, including the loss of significant acreage because of flooding, delayed planting because of wet conditions, drought and excessively hot summer temperatures, came in below initial expectations, with corn

reserves at times during the year reaching record lows. That caused tremendous volatility in grain markets, prompted speculative buying and increased the risk of localized corn shortages. Projections for the 2012 crop year show little improvement in total corn reserve carry over, enhancing the financial risk faced by pork producers, who must compete against subsidized users of corn for increasingly difficult to obtain supplies of corn.

Pork producers have asked Congress and the Obama Administration to consider a variety of responses, including reactivating the Inter-departmental Livestock Task Force to help identify policies to avert a feed-related crisis in the livestock industry, reforming the Conservation Reserve Program to put more land in production and to allow the penalty-free early release of the least environmentally sensitive acres in the event of a feed crisis and making available to producers all USDA and Federal emergency programs and loan guarantees to help them purchase feed should they encounter regional grain shortages. Additionally, the U.S. pork producers support H.R. 3097, the Renewable Fuel Standard Flexibility Act, which creates a safety valve that makes short-term adjustments to the RFS in the event of a grain crisis to ensure adequate supplies of feed is available for producers.

Research and development also are needed to find other energy alternatives, such as using animal manure and fat and biomass, including switchgrass and corn stover. Pork producers want to emphasize the right balance is needed to meet the needs of fuel and feed security.

2. Developing a world-class disease surveillance system is vital to the continued viability of the U.S. pork industry. The outbreak of H1N1 in 2009 demonstrated the interrelationship of human and animal health when combating new and emerging diseases. From that experience, the U.S. pork industry learned that a more Comprehensive and Integrated Surveillance System (CISS) is needed to ensure the capture of data about a broader range of diseases. The industry began working collaboratively with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop a CISS. CDC supports the CISS, and APHIS's Veterinary Services (VS) program has embraced this concept and included comprehensive surveillance as a major objective in its strategic plan, VS-2015. Completion of CISS is critical to maintaining the pork industry's disease-free status, which is critical to maintaining and expanding our exports.

Disease surveillance is the foundation of disease prevention and preparedness. The threat of new and emerging diseases continues to grow, with scientists continually warning the public and animal health authorities about prevention and preparedness. One of the more grim aspects of these warnings is that many of these diseases are zoonotic and are originating in wildlife and domestic animals. The CISS is designed to provide an "early warning system" and to allow for development of response plans in advance of an epidemic. The U.S. pork industry currently is collaborating with APHIS on a pilot project to test implementation of a CISS and to determine how it can be connected to an animal traceability system. Currently, the most significant shortcoming is funds to build the infrastructure to accommodate a more robust system of surveillance. In 2009, the emergency supplemental appropriation, which made funds available to CDC for managing the H1N1 crisis, also provided \$25 million to APHIS/VS for swine influenza surveillance. Of that amount, approximately \$17 million remains unused, money that could be used to support a surveillance system covering new and emerging diseases would also support the infrastructure for CISS. Although the pork industry has been working cooperatively with APHIS and the agency has committed to developing a CISS, the President's USDA budget for fiscal 2013 inexplicably proposed a reduction of \$2.6 million for swine disease surveillance. The justification for the decrease is inconsistent with USDA's commitment and the requirements for implementing a CISS. The ability to expand surveillance to include other diseases will increase exports. Reducing surveillance provides other countries the justification to restrict U.S. exports because of inadequate surveillance data.

U.S. pork producers also support USDA's animal traceability system.

An effective traceability system is critical to the national animal health infrastructure and is required for certification by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). The ability to quickly trace diseased and exposed animals during a foreign animal disease outbreak would save millions of animals, lessen the financial burden on the industry and save the American taxpayer millions of dollars. With support from all sectors of the pork industry, approximately 95 percent of pork producer's premises already are registered under the USDA livestock identification program. Premises identification is the key to meeting a goal of tracing an animal back to its farm of origin within 48 hours, which would allow animal health officials to more quickly identify, control and eradicate a disease, to prevent the spread of a disease or to make certifications to our trading partners about diseases in the United States.

3. Expanding markets to U.S. pork products increases producers bottom line and contributes significantly to the U.S. economy, prompting job growth and increasing the U.S. gross domestic product. Pork represents 44 percent of global meat protein intake, far more than beef and poultry, and world pork trade has grown significantly in the past several years. The extent of this increase in global pork trade in the future will hinge heavily on continued efforts to increase agricultural trade liberalization.

The U.S. pork industry exported in 2011 more than \$6 billion of product, which supported more than 50,000 jobs. And the trade agreements with Colombia, Panama and South Korea approved last fall, when fully implemented, will boost U.S. pork exports to those countries by a combined \$772 million, add \$11 to the price producers receive for each hog marketed and generate more than 10,000 U.S. pork industry jobs. It is estimated that U.S. pork prices were \$55 per hog higher in 2011 than they would have been in the absence of exports.

It is important to emphasize the need to strengthen the ability of U.S. agriculture to compete in the global marketplace. But the downside of growing exports is, of course, the larger economic impact on producers and the U.S. economy should there be any disruption in trade. Pork producers understand this dynamic and recognize that it would be devastating for the U.S. pork sector.

4. Protecting producers against disruptions in trade is paramount. Producers like Asay need better risk-management tools to protect their operations should exports markets ever be interrupted by a serious animal disease outbreak in this country.

Such tools are needed now, more than ever. Outbreaks of devastating foreign animal diseases such as foot and mouth, classical swine fever and African swine fever are increasing around the world. The increased presences of disease, along with increasing international travel and trade that move diseases around the world, have created an unprecedented risk to the U.S. pork industry.

According to a recent study, revenue for the combined beef and pork industries would fall by billions of dollars annually as a result of a foreign animal disease outbreak. The recent free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama and South Korea as well as economic growth in China will lead to continued pork export expansion. But if these export markets are lost and livestock producers are forced to bear the resulting financial harm, there will be thousands of bankruptcies in rural America. Further, USDA is expected to change its traditional approach to dealing with foreign animal diseases from "stamping out" to one that includes vaccinating and, potentially, living with diseases for an undetermined time.

There is a simple solution to the elevated risk in livestock production. USDA has been running a pilot insurance program for hog producers called Livestock Gross Margin (LGM). The program is designed to protect hog producers from systemic risk much as crop insurance programs do for crop producers. The program now is ready for prime time and should be allowed to take on this role. To structure the program to provide inexpensive, catastrophic coverage, Congress would need to remove the \$3 million cap on swine insurance.

The \$3 million limit on spending has caused USDA to severely restrict the number of head that any one producer can insure. In fact, last year just 205,883 hogs were covered; in 2010, only 263,454 hogs were covered. With the U.S. pork industry marketing more than 110 million hogs a year, it is clear that the current LGM program has little benefit to pork producers.

The limit on coverage--Congress capped the program for all species at \$20 million (\$16 million is used by the dairy industry), and USDA set a coverage limit of 30,000 head--is a new development for USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) because there is no upper limit on the number of crop acres that can be insured under other RMA policies. There is nothing in the Federal Crop Insurance Act that allows RMA to engage in social engineering of this type. In fact, the Agriculture Risk Protection Act of 2000 states the following:

Eligible producers:

Any producer of a type of livestock covered by a pilot program under this subsection that owns or operates a farm or ranch in a county selected as a location for that pilot program shall be eligible to participate in that pilot program.

The limit on the insurable livestock farm size is unfortunate for two reasons. First, the livestock industry is evolving toward larger production units, and these larger units are essentially prohibited from using the product as a catastrophic policy to cover their output in excess of the numerical limits. Second, the existence of a limit is divisive, potentially pitting smaller units against larger ones.

Additionally, LGM for swine now is available only for a 6 month period. This is not enough coverage to protect against drought or to downsize an operation. This is easily fixed, and a policy that insures for one year is feasible. This policy would roll over every month so producers always have one year of insurance coverage.

The owners of LGM have indicated that they are willing to make the changes described above if the \$3 million limit is eliminated and the policy is allowed to move beyond pilot status.

Finally, companies and agents selling LGM are reimbursed based on the premium paid by the producer rather than on the number of policies. Total administration and operation (A&O) reimbursement for companies and agents is set at 22.2 percent of the producer premium. This means that a catastrophic policy that sells at \$1 per hog for 500 hogs would have a total A&O of \$111. This A&O needs to be split to cover the company's costs and the agent's costs. A typical reimbursement for selling a crop insurance policy is from \$500 to \$700. This percentage-based A&O policy for livestock makes it economically infeasible for the agent to sell catastrophic policies or to sell to smaller producers. One easy remedy is to allow the agent to choose between reimbursement based on a percent of the premium or a fixed per-contract amount.

Today, because of the growth in exports of U.S. pork products and the increased chances of a foreign animal disease outbreak, the potential for a catastrophic drop in hog prices is greater than ever. And the stakes for the U.S. economy, which garners \$35 billion annually in gross domestic product and 550,000 jobs from the U.S. pork industry, also are great.

The U.S. pork industry has done much to protect itself, including increased biosecurity on farms, implementation of a national swine identification program and calls for a comprehensive disease surveillance system, but it needs more. Pork producers encourage Congress to urge USDA to develop a catastrophic insurance product that is more in keeping with today's swine industry needs.

5. Protecting the environment is a top priority of the U.S. pork industry. Pork producers are committed to running productive pork operations while protecting the environment and exceeding environmental regulations. Pork producers have fought hard for science-based, affordable and effective regulatory policies that meet the goals of today's environmental statutes. For producers to meet these costly demands while maintaining

production, they believe that the Federal Government must provide through conservation programs of the farm bill. such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), cost-share support to help them defray some of the costs of compliance.

The EQIP program has not provided pork producers with enough support to meet all the challenges we face related to conservation and the environment. Producers like Asay, who has used the program, would like to see the scope of projects covered by the program widened.

Pork producers take a broad view of what it means to be environmentally responsible farmers and business people, and they have embraced the fact that their pork processing operations must protect and conserve the environment and the resources they use and affect. They take this responsibility with the utmost seriousness and commitment. and it is in that spirit that producers would make major contributions to improving their practices through a conservation title of the farm bill.

Investing in research also is critical to the U.S. pork industry. Producers rely on it for improving swine genetics, testing and deploying new and improved animal vaccines, improving the usefulness of energy production by-products such as distillers dried grains and for further increasing animal productivity. Research also can assist in monitoring diseases and preventing a disease outbreak.

6. Dictating how the U.S. pork industry buys, sells and raises its animals would severely cripple the competitiveness of pork producers. Mandates--whether pushed by lawmakers or activists--must not stand in the way of market-based demands. Producers understand that the issue of banning packer ownership of livestock or eliminating forward contracting continues to be discussed. However, they do not believe that the U.S. pork industry will be well served by having Congress eliminate certain types of contracting mechanisms. This only forces the livestock markets to revert to an inefficient system used more than half a century ago in which livestock were traded in small lots and at prices determined in an open-market bid system. This system was inefficient and makes no economic sense in today's economy. Today, the U.S. pork industry has developed a wide variety of marketing and pricing methods, including contracts, to meet the changing needs of a diverse marketplace.

Economics should determine the structure of pork production and processing, including the ownership of both. No economic research ever has shown that either the structure or marketing practices of the industry have harmed producers or consumers. Until such research exists, Congress should not impose limitations on packer ownership of production, producer ownership of packing or marketing contracts.

Likewise, Federal mandates on production practices, including ones that would dictate animal housing systems, would add to producers' costs and weaken the U.S. pork industry's competitiveness vis-a-vis foreign competitors. It is for those reasons that producers oppose the "Egg Products Inspection Act Amendments" (H.R. 3798), which would dictate the size of cages for laying hens.

The bill would amend a Federal food-safety law. If provisions of that law are imposed on imported products, they must meet the World Trade Organization's equivalency principle, which requires governments to recognize other countries' science-based measures as acceptable even if they are different from their own, so long as an equivalent level of protection is provided.

But proponents of H.R. 3798 have admitted that the standards in this bill are arbitrary and were part of a negotiated settlement between an industry group and an animal activist group; they are not based on science that protects and improves food safety and public health. If imposed on imported products (eggs, in this case), they would not meet the WTO's equivalence principle.

The U.S. pork industry has no doubt that activist groups and special interest groups will be watching this farm bill debate

and will attempt to push their particular agendas, which would add regulations to our business practices. Lawmakers must be cautious about allowing these issues to be added to the 2012 Farm Bill--a piece of legislation that has been aimed for the past 65 years at maintaining the competitiveness of the U.S. agriculture and livestock sectors.

The U.S. pork industry has developed and implemented strict standards for animal care and judicious use guidelines for use of animal drugs. These standards and guidelines are now part of the industry's pork quality assurance and transport quality assurance programs. These require producers and handlers to be trained and certified to care and transport our animals with the utmost care and concern. Pork producers do not believe that Congress should legislate on these issues as part of the 2012 Farm Bill.

Congress should craft a farm bill that helps farmers like Gary Asay remain competitive in the domestic and world markets.

The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Asay.
Mr. Davis, proceed whenever you are ready.

STATEMENT OF TERRY DAVIS, CORN AND SOYBEAN PRODUCER, ROSEVILLE, IL

Mr. Davis. Hello. Good morning, my name is Terry Davis, a corn and soybean farmer from Warren County, in Roseville, Illinois. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Agriculture Committee gracious enough to come before us today and those in attendance here today to listen to this important discussion. Today, we all share one commonality, this is our America. I wish to welcome everyone here today to my America, as I live only about 30 miles from this site. To describe this, I will use a line from the song by Irving Berlin, "God Bless America, land that I love, stand beside her and guide her." I come here this morning to tell you how I stand beside my part of America, not only to provide for my family but to provide this country with a plentiful, healthy, sustainable food supply; and hopefully raise enough extra that I can share my bounty with others around the world. And I ask you here today to be the guide, guide her to share my philosophy with the rest of the world.

I will comment on a story that I will share. Go back to 9/11/2001. I was traveling to an ethanol plant meeting, the formation of a group we were having and I received a phone call that we could not meet that day because something had happened in New York City and Washington, D.C. I did not yet know at that time what that was.

Later that afternoon, I had the opportunity to receive a phone call from my wife that was waiting in an hour and a half long line at a gas station to get gasoline for her car because of what was going on that day. I was headed to a meeting that afternoon, happened to drive by a gas station, saw the line, told my wife if that was the last tank of gas she was ever going to get, she was better off to come home, because the grocery truck would not make it to the store tomorrow morning. But to my shock, as I drove to that meeting that afternoon, there was no one at the grocery stores, everybody was at the gas stations buying gasoline.

And the reason I think this important for this discussion today is that energy was important to us, yes; but why have we forgotten about food? If it comes down to a tank of gasoline or a loaf of bread, I know which line I am going to be in.

I would like to talk about the conservation title today. This title is often understated in its importance to the overall farm bill and I feel it is one of the most critical to its overall mission. I served as the Association of Conservation District's President here in Illinois and I had a column that I used every month to talk about the things that I felt were important for the Soil and Water Conservation District. I closed that column every month with this closing. "As always, remember that this is God's handiwork we are entrusted to watch over. Let us make him proud."

We all farm the land, we survive off of the bounty of our land, but we are just stewards of that land and we are allowed the privilege of being the caretakers of the land that we work during our lifetime. American agriculture is being tasked with a mission never before seen in modern history, that is the need to feed and protect more people with limited and in some cases

dwindling natural resources. Every day in this country more land is converted for non-agricultural uses while all the while trying to feed a growing population. I am not advocating a moratorium on non-ag uses of the productive working land of the United States, but refocusing on what is of greater importance; cropland, animal production, forestry needs rather than development for social uses.

A strong underlying safety net is going to be necessary for creating a sustainable food supply. We need a strong commodities title along with a crop insurance program utilizing current programs and funding with a few tweaks. I feel that this underlying support should come from Federal farm programs to ensure that any raw input commodity producer receives enough support to ensure that they will again next year be able to raise production because of the alteration of this year's production, or due to weather or financial condition. This level should cover variable costs and protect against significantly lower commodity prices and a little bit more.

The farm bill provisions are intertwined and work together to be much more successful than any title will individually. A comprehensive, robust title I for commodities ensures continued sustainable domestic food supply. A vibrant renewable energy title can not only provide energy sources here at home but also create environments for natural resource conservation while allowing producers to generate income and provide an outlet for excess production. This excess production we will always need. As before, we have used loan rates and government sponsored storage to keep extra production. Today, we have the ability to allow farmers to hang onto those reserves and convert them into renewable energy sources if not needed as a fuel source. But if that crop is never raised, it will never be available if needed. A secure, adequately funded conservation title will create those opportunities.

I thank you for this opportunity to be before you this morning and look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Davis follows:]

Prepared Statement of Terry Davis, Corn and Soybean Producer,
Roseville, IL

Good morning Chairman Lucas, distinguished Members of the House Agriculture Committee, House staff, the other invited panel members and all others here in attendance today we all share one commonality this is OUR AMERICA. I wish to welcome everyone to my America, as I only live about 30 miles from this site, and to describe this I will use a line from the song by Irving Berlin; ``God Bless America, Land that I love. Stand beside her, and Guide her". I have come here before you this morning to tell you of how I stand beside my part of America, not only to provide for my family but to provide this country with a plentiful, healthy, sustainable food supply and hopefully raise enough extra that I can share my bounty with others around the world.

I come before you this morning to share from my perspective, a perspective that recognizes the importance of a strong equitable 2012 Farm Bill. This perspective does not want to rewrite farm bill policy totally, but rather celebrate its successes and build upon and those successes and hopefully craft a new 2012 Farm Bill that addresses the needs of the next 5 years and reviews and retires no longer pertinent addressed items. This bill has many titles expressed under its banner, but I feel that they are all intertwined and dependent upon each other for successful implementation of this farm bill. I do not feel that any title within the farm bill is any more important than another title; it is only with fair deliberation, implementation, and adequate appropriation that any farm bill effort will accomplish its goal. That goal is of GUARANTEEING the same goals that I have set for myself, to provide this country with a plentiful, healthy, sustainable food supply and then produce enough extra that I can share my bounty with others around the world. I recognize that this task becomes a little more complicated at the national level. I also realize that numerous, different segments of the populous want to have inclusions in this farm bill; but I feel strongly that the goal here in the farm bill is to do what government can to make sure that every American has adequate access to something to eat and then to have access to the food, energy and fiber materials that we need to exist and prosper.

The area I would like to focus your attention to right now is the conservation title. This title often understated in its importance to the overall farm bill but I feel it is one of the most critical to its overall mission. I have had the opportunity to serve the association that speaks for the Soil and Water Conservation Districts here in Illinois as its President and as part of my duties was to write a monthly column for the organization's newsletter. I closed that column every month with this closing, ``As always, Remember that this is God's

handiwork we are entrusted to watch over. Let's make him proud".

I am a Christian, but maybe for sake of this day more important is the fact that we are all just stewards that are allowed the privilege of being the caretakers of the land we work on during our lifetimes. American agriculture is being tasked with a mission never seen before during modern history, that of a need to feed and protect more people with limited and in some cases dwindling natural resources. Every day in this country more land is converted for non agricultural uses all the while trying to feed a growing population. I am not advocating a moratorium on non ag uses of the productive working land of the USA but refocusing on what is of greater importance; cropland, animal production, forestry needs rather than development for social uses.

We only need to look back into our country's history to see how important conservation has become. It began a desire to protect things that were unique or in someone's opinion important to protect. Our National Park System and other Federal public lands as well as state and local public land holdings recognize that resources need preserving for future generations. Now as it becomes apparent that the working lands of this country are finite and that we need to protect them. The challenge here is that we cannot just lock them away but have to use them sustainably. The conservation accomplishments that have been achieved by this country are nothing short of spectacular, but vigilance and continued efforts are paramount to the survival of the human species as we wish it to be. Once our natural resources are lost our prosperity also will be lost. Conservation for me on my farm means this: Preservation of the natural resources not only for my benefit but to preserve the ability to utilize those by future generations and by using the conservation title of the farm bill in conjunction and along with other titles within the farm bill to secure and preserve a stable, sustainable food, fiber, and renewable energy supply.

To understand the working lands let us look back to the 1930's This country was trying to rebuild itself as for the first time in our country's history we had a large segment of the population that finally did not have to work the land for themselves but could have someone else furnish those needs for them while they enjoyed prosperity through the financial markets. Then that bubble burst in 1929 and sent many scrambling back to feed themselves. A result of that was accelerated damaging of new marginal lands in production. The lack of understanding that marginal lands means just that marginal, the Dust Bowl resulted and many more people found themselves struggling to just survive. Throw in Mother Nature creating a drought. Hugh Bennett came along and championed for working land as some say Theodore Roosevelt did for public land preservation. The result being the formation of the Soil Conservation Service. As I look at drought indicators today I realize that the results of the formation of SCS are what separates the Dust Bowl Days from what we experience today. Thus this conservation title is very important in the protection of the working lands of the USA. We do not need to extensively rewrite this title in the next farm bill but continue to focus on what are the critical needs. In my estimation NRCS and the EQIP program needs further funding and expansion. This is a very efficient and effective way to get conservation on the ground. I believe many other programs needs can be accomplished through EQIP and allowing prioritization to fit financial budgets. There is an attitude currently that since EQIP is receiving funding those funds can be rediverted to under-funded special interest programs and this has to be curtailed. The NRCS EQIP system already is set up to allow states to cater the funding to localized needs thus improving effectiveness of monies spent.

There does need to be a conservation compliance component to complement production safety nets. Production agriculture is changing and there needs to be compliance to guarantee sustainability and to protect the accomplishments that the millions of Federal assistance dollars that have already been spent on have achieved. I have noticed that as farms get bigger, operations become more specialized, with farmers many times not even seeing the land only the tractor operators. These operators only have one mission, that is to do what they are instructed. The farmer producer may not even be aware of a problem occurring until confronted by some outside entity or agency. Conservation compliance is the strongest tool in the farm bill to ensure good stewardship and wise use of Federal funds.

A strong underlying safety net is priority one to creating a sustainable food supply. The tools of choice are a strong commodities title along with a crop insurance program utilizing current programs and funding with a few tweaks. All crops need to have a insurance program developed around them, including livestock. This underlying support should come from Federal farm program funding to ensure that any raw input commodity producer receives enough support to ensure that they will try again the next year if their production falters because of weather or financial conditions. This level should cover variable costs and protect against significantly lower commodity prices and

little more to limit government exposure and allow efficient producers to determine who farms the land not who has the best crop insurance protection. Livestock producers could be included by a similar insurance plan limiting coverage to cost of feed inputs. Producers should be allowed to buy up insurance protection to higher levels but that risk should not be financed or underwritten by the Federal budget but rather an unsubsidized function by private insurance companies and risk assessed and rated accordingly by the insurance industry.

Farm bill provisions are intertwined and working together will be much more successful than any title individually. A comprehensive, robust title I for commodities ensures a continued sustainable domestic food supply. A vibrant renewable energy title can not only provide energy sources here at home but create environments for natural resource conservation while allowing producers to generate income and provide an outlet for excess production. This extra production will always be in reserve in case there is a need to use it as a food source. But if that crop is never raised it will never be available if needed. A secure, adequately funded conservation title will create opportunities and preserve and protect natural resources for continued future utilization.

Once we have created this plentiful food supply we need to be able to allow all Americans some kind of access to it. Current food aid provisions are sometimes abused and probably need attention to weed out fraud and abuse. If there were only certain types of purchases that could be made would help ensure proper use of funds. Stories like those of persons buying soda with Federal food aid assistance and then recycling unopened soda cans in automated can recyclers for the cash generated by the cans is an example of misuse of a valuable system to society.

Thank you for allowing a taxpayer to comment on this subject. To achieve these goals we only need to keep refocusing on what is first priority and what financial resources we are willing to commit to achieve those goals. Current farm bill programs have accomplished so much for the safety and prosperity of the United States. Hopefully the 2012 Farm Bill will further allow America to be the proud beacon of hope for the rest of the world.

I close my testimony as I did for my informational column:

``As always, Remember that this is God's handiwork we are entrusted to watch over.

Let's make him proud."

[GRAPHIC(S) NOT AVAILABLE IN TIFF FORMAT]

The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Davis.
Mr. Howell, you may proceed.

STATEMENT OF DAVID W. HOWELL, CORN, SOYBEAN, PUMPKIN, AND
TOMATO PRODUCER, MIDDLETOWN, IN

Mr. Howell. Good morning. My name is David Howell. I am honored to be here this morning to testify.

I am a farmer from Middletown, Indiana. My wife and I started our family farm in 1971. It is our vision that our children will be able to carry on. Our family farm is approximately 7,000 acres, more than 90 percent of which is leased. We grow corn, soybeans, about 500 acres of jack o'lantern pumpkins and about 500 acres of processing tomatoes. Our tomato production is under contract to a company called Red Gold, Inc., an Indiana tomato processing company.

We are seeking a modification of Federal law that restricts Midwestern farmers from growing fruits and vegetables on program acres.

The issue: since 1996, the farm policy has generally prohibited production of fruits and vegetables on base acreage. However, this was not significant until the 2002 Farm Bill, which made soybeans a program crop. This change meant that virtually all of the quality farmland in states like Indiana and Illinois now have a program base.

The problem is two-fold.

First, program restrictions. For example, our farm has been personally affected by the prohibition on growing fruits and vegetables. Our family is in transition to the next generation from my wife and me. We began our processing tomato operation

in the early 1990s and established our personal production history over the years. The regulations as they stand now serve to limit the abilities of my children to diversify their farming enterprise with specialty crops. In essence, the prohibition on planting fruits and vegetables are protecting my wife and me from our own children. This seems contrary to any goal of encouraging young farmers. Additionally, we are needing to change our business structure to ensure an orderly generational transfer. When we do, however, our producer history will be lost.

Second, fear of base acreage loss. We have struggled to rent ground for growing processing tomatoes and pumpkins over the years. In the Midwest, most family farms rely on rented acres to grow their crops. I have found that the landlords fear, and rationally so, that future base recalculations will result in loss of base acres on their farms if they rent for processing tomato production.

H.R. 2675, the Farming Flexibility Act of 2011, would fix this twofold problem by allowing an acre-for-acre opt out from the program acreage for production of fruits and vegetables for processing. Also, it would declare a policy that vegetable production for processing on program base acres will not cause future loss of base acreage.

I realize that some in the fresh produce industry do not agree with me. They make two basic point. And let me address those.

They suggest that the 2002 Farm Bill restrictions do not present a real problem. And that is wrong.

First, it is a problem because of the restrictions. As we attempt to pass along our operation to the next generation, our producer history will be lost. And it harms the traditional industry that provides safe and economical food to a population in need of better nutrition.

Second, as a threat to base acreage, I and my landlords have lost base acres clearly.

Third, it is a threat to my market. As times goes on, about five percent of Midwest vegetable producers stop growing vegetables each year. That means that each year, it will be harder for our processor market to stay in business because they cannot contract for enough production. This year is the first time that some of them were not able to contract for their production capacity. Eventually, we will lose those processors, and the canned vegetable market will be taken over by imports.

Italians can put tomatoes on the East Coast cheaper than California canners. South America is already exporting a range of vegetables into these states, such as corn, asparagus, and tomatoes could not be far behind.

Clearly, this is a real problem.

Opponents of H.R. 2675 also claim that it would somehow hurt fresh produce producers. And this is also wrong. It would not hurt the producers.

First, it is against the law for us to use or produce to sell to the fresh produce market and production would have to be for processing only. Penalties for the program are very high.

Second, vegetables for processing are not the vegetable varieties produced for fresh market anyway.

Third, H.R. 2675 would just take us back to the 1996 Farm Bill situation prior to the inclusion of oilseed acreage. Under the 1996 Farm Bill and even before that, the Midwestern processing industry was getting smaller, not expanding.

There is no way that this would hurt the fresh produce producers.

A final couple of points. I realize and support that direct payments may be eliminated in the next farm bill. If that is done, we submit that the restrictions on producing fruits and vegetables should be eliminated altogether. And obviously, the fruit and vegetables we grow for processing go to nearby processing facilities, which means jobs in rural America. This is important throughout the Midwest.

Finally, the Federal Crop Insurance Program for specialty crops have not received the same refinement and upgrades as have traditional commodity crops and should be scrutinized to offer reasonable protection for the growers of our nation's food supply.

Thank you for coming to the Midwest to hear us.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Howell follows:]

Prepared Statement of David W. Howell, Corn, Soybean, Pumpkin, and

Tomato Producer, Middletown, IN

Introduction

Good morning. My name is David Howell. I am honored to present testimony today.

I am a farmer from Middletown, Indiana. My wife and I started our family farm upon returning home from college, and it is our vision that our children and their families will successfully transition what we sacrificed and worked hard to establish. Our family farms approximately 7,000 acres, of which more than 90% is leased. We grow corn, soybeans, pumpkins and about 500 acres of processing tomatoes. Our tomato production is under contract with Red Gold, Inc., an Indiana tomato processing company.

We are seeking a modification of Federal law that restricts Midwestern farmers from growing fruits and vegetables on program acres. I am here as one family farmer, but we do concur totally with the position of the American Fruit and Vegetable Processors and Growers Coalition (AFVPGC).

The Issue

Since 1996, farm policy generally has prohibited the production of fruits and vegetables on base acreage. However, this was not a significant problem until the 2002 Farm Bill made soybeans a program crop. This change meant that virtually all of the quality farmland in states like Indiana now have program base.

The problem is twofold.

First, program restrictions. For example, our farm has been personally affected by the prohibition on growing fruits and vegetables. Our family is in transition to the next generation from my wife and me. We began our processing tomato operation in the early 1990's and established our personal production history over the years. The regulations as they stand now serve to limit the abilities of my children to diversify their farming enterprise with specialty crops, not enhance them as any good agricultural policy would attempt to do. In essence, the prohibition on planting Fruits and Vegetables are protecting my wife and me from our own children entering the very enterprise that will help ensure their success because there is no mechanism for them to either earn their own producer history or have my producer history transferred to them, even though we have been continuously engaged in growing processing tomatoes for nearly 20 years. This seems contrary to any goal of encouraging young farmers to seek alternative crops and provide a more sustainable future, both economically and environmentally. Additionally, we are needing to change our business structure to ensure an orderly generational transition. When we do, however, our producer history will be lost.

Second, fear of base acreage loss. We have struggled to get rented ground for growing our processing tomatoes and pumpkins. In the Midwest, most family farms rely on rented acres to grow their crops. I have found that landlords who I have approached fear, and rationally so, that future base recalculations will result in loss of base acres on their farms if they rent it to me for processing tomato production. This means that my ability to rotate crops as a good IPM practice and to fulfill my traditional contract obligation to Red Gold is severely restricted.

H.R. 2675, the Farming Flexibility Act of 2011, would fix this twofold problem by allowing an acre-for-acre opt out from the program acreage for production of fruits or vegetables under contract for processing. Also, it would declare a policy that vegetable production for processing on program base acres will not cause future loss of base acreage.

I realize that some in the fresh produce industry do not agree with me. They make two basic points. Let me address those.

They suggest that the 2002 Farm Bill restrictions do not present a real problem. That is wrong.

First, it is a problem because of the restrictions. As we attempt to pass along our operation to the next generation, our producer history will be lost, because it is not transferable. What my wife and I worked hard to establish under the rules will simply vanish and the ability to lease production acres for fruits and vegetables for processing will artificially be hindered, not by a free market determination, but by a protectionist decree that offers no actual protection but harms a traditional industry that provides safe and economical foods to a population in need of better nutrition.

Second, this is a threat to base acreage. I have lost base acreage, some of my landlords have lost base acreage, and that has happened to my neighbors who grow vegetables. This base acreage experience is why my landlords generally will not let me grow vegetables on leased land and in some cases specifically prohibit the production of fruits and vegetables

because of this issue. My colleagues who grow vegetables are facing the same thing. Most family farms have significant production on leased land.

Third, this is a threat to my market. As time goes on, about five percent of Midwest vegetables producers stop growing vegetables each year. That means that each year, it will be harder for our processor market to stay in business because they cannot contract for enough production. This year is the first time that some of them were not able to contract for their production capacity. Each year this will get worse. Eventually, we will lose processors, and the canned vegetables market will be taken over by imports.

Italians can put tomatoes on the East Coast cheaper than California canners. South America is already importing a range of other canned vegetables, such as corn and asparagus.

Clearly, this is a real problem. Opponents of H.R. 2675 also claim that it would somehow hurt fresh producers. This is also wrong.

H.R. 2675 is narrowly tailored. It would not hurt fresh producers.

First, it would be against the law for us to grow vegetables for fresh markets. H.R. 2675 would only allow opt out for FAV production FOR PROCESSING. The production would have to be for processing.

Penalties for program violations are very heavy--I would be crazy to intentionally violate program rules. (Penalties are equal to twice the per acre value of the tomato crop produced in violation.)

Second, vegetables for processing are not the vegetable varieties produced for fresh anyway. My family has been growing processing tomatoes for 20 years and, even though it has been legal to sell them to fresh markets, we never have.

They are the wrong variety--not right for the fresh market.

So, there is no market for them.

Where there is no market, there is no market distribution system.

Third, H.R. 2675 would just take us back to the 1996 Farm Bill situation prior to the inclusion of oilseed acreage. Under the 1996 Farm Bill and even before that, the Midwest processing industry was getting smaller, not expanding.

There is no way that this would hurt fresh producers.

A couple final points. I realize that Direct Payments may be eliminated in the next farm bill. If that is done, we submit that the restriction on producing Fruit and Vegetables should be eliminated altogether. Of course, the fruit and vegetables we grow for processing go to nearby processing facilities, which means jobs in rural areas. This is important throughout the Midwest. Here in Illinois, there is a LIBBY'S facility that produces canned pumpkin, pumpkin pie filling and pumpkin bread from the pumpkins produced by 70 farmers on 8,000 acres. These pumpkin products have seen periodic shortages in recent years due to several factors, one of which is the company's difficulty in contracting enough acres. So, Farm Flexibility is critically important. The Federal Crop insurance programs for specialty crops have not received the same refinement and upgrades as have the traditional commodity crops and should be scrutinized to offer reasonable protection for the growers of our nation's food supply.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Howell.
Ms. Weber, please begin whenever you are ready.

STATEMENT OF JANE A. WEBER, SPECIALTY CROP PRODUCER,
BETTENDORF, IA

Ms. Weber, Chairman Lucas, Representative Boswell, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today about the impact of the farm bill from the perspective of a small farmer. My name is Jane Weber of Weber Farm, row crop farmer, specialty crop producer, and farmers' market vendor from Scott County in east central Iowa. I serve as a Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner in my county to conserve the soil and improve water quality. There are several parts of the 2012 Farm Bill that are important to our farm, specialty crop producers, and conservation.

First, the conservation title: the farmland in our area as well as my own farm historically benefitted from locally-led, incentive-based conservation practices of CRP, EQIP and various other conservation programs. Producers rely on the NRCS for technical help to develop conservation plans, design conservation practices, make wetland determinations, and provide guidance on highly erodible lands. Weber Farm has installed contour buffer strips, filter strips, grass waterways, tiling, and farmstead windbreak. Conservation technical assistance, funded by the NRCS, is critical to conservation practices getting installed through Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Iowa and to farm bill programs being implemented. Workloads in the USDA Service Centers remain high for conservation programs, while funding for CTA remains critically low. Without technicians, NRCS and SWCDs cannot deliver conservation programs.

Four years ago the Cedar and Iowa Rivers flooded along with the Mississippi River, devastating the towns of Cedar Rapids, Iowa City, Columbus Junction and Oakville in eastern Iowa, along with the cropland in the water's path. Where conservation structures were not in place, soil was carried downstream along with the floodwaters. However, where two, three or more conservation practices occurred on farmland, the water damage was not as significant. Less soil and water left the area. In other words, the conservation practices worked.

Last year, it was the Missouri River that flooded in western Iowa. More conservation practices installed before a disaster may protect our valuable resources from disaster. In the spirit of making the most economical choice, Congress should adequately fund conservation today to avoid the increased costs of repair tomorrow and in the future.

Second, the nutrition title: as a farmers' market vendor, I participate in the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program that provides fresh locally grown produce to low income seniors at the farmers' markets. This program has increased the profitability of producers and is appreciated by the consumers. Each year, I have inquiries from senior citizens on how to obtain vouchers and I have observed how the seniors frugally utilize them to stretch throughout the season. As Iowa's population is aging, I am seeing more demand for participation in the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, as well as an increasing need per person. In these economic times, seniors with fixed incomes are having difficulty eating nutritiously. Just as good nutrition helps all of us maintain good health, it would be cost-effective to help these seniors eat more fresh fruits and vegetables for better nutrition to keep them healthy.

Third, the horticulture title: specialty crops are an important part of agriculture that allow farmers to diversify. Specialty Crop Block Grants try to help increase this competitiveness of specialty crops. In our state, they have supported educational efforts on food safety, research by our universities and marketing efforts that encourage consumers to choose locally grown products. I have written and received grants for two organizations. I have also served on a grant review board in our state. The grant process needs to be simplified so that more farmers' markets may access funds for marketing efforts to encourage consumers to buy fresh produce. These markets are the front lines in the direct marketing of specialty crops.

A strong conservation title is important for our production agriculture. NRCS and SWCDs are the key delivery system at the local level. The availability of program funding and the CTA allow the implementation of conservation practices as long-term investments in the protection of our natural resources.

Farm policy also must consider the growing consumer interest in fresh, healthy local food and provide access for low income populations. Specialty crop producers need a mix of programs aimed at enhancing profitability and an innovative

marketing strategy to promote specialty crops and to educate consumers. The importance of passing the farm bill before break allows agencies to be prepared and producers to plant and make informed business decisions.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Weber follows:]

Prepared Statement of Jane A. Weber, Specialty Crop Producer,
Bettendorf, IA

Chairman Lucas, Ranking Member Peterson, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today about the impact of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 from the perspective of a small farmer. My name is Jane Weber of Weber Farm--row crop farmer, specialty crop producer, and farmers' market vendor--from Scott County, in east central Iowa. I serve as a Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner in my county to conserve the soil and improve water quality. There are several parts of the 2012 Farm Bill that are important to our farm, specialty crop producers, and conservation.

Conservation Title

The farm land in our area as well as my own farm has benefited from the locally-led, incentive-based conservation practices of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and various other conservation programs. Producers rely on the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for technical help to develop conservation plans, design conservation practices, make wetland determinations, and provide guidance on highly erodible land (HEL). Weber Farm has installed contour buffer strips, filter strips, grass waterways, tiling, and a farmstead windbreak. Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) funded by NRCS is critical to conservation practices getting installed through Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) in Iowa and to farm bill programs being implemented. Workloads in USDA Service Centers remain high for conservation programs while funding for CTA remains critically low. Without technicians, NRCS and SWCDs can not deliver conservation programs.

To protect our lakes and clean up our creeks and rivers from sediment and nutrient delivery, conservation programs are integral to improving water quality. As an IOWATER volunteer that participates in spring and fall snapshot water samplings in our county for 9 years, I have seen the results identify conservation needs in the community that our SWCD was able to help alleviate with conservation practices cost shared with landowners. As an Iowa Watershed Improvement Review Board (WIRB) member, I have seen the partnerships of NRCS, DSC, EPA 319, and WIRB work together to improve water quality in projects throughout our state.

Four years ago the Cedar and Iowa Rivers flooded along with the Mississippi River devastating the towns of Cedar Rapids, Iowa City, Columbus Jct., and Oakville in eastern Iowa along with cropland in the waters' path. Where conservation structures were not in place, soil was being carried downstream along with the flood waters. However, where two, three, or more conservation practices occurred on farmland the water damage was not as significant. Less soil and water left the area. In other words, the conservation practices worked.

Last year it was the Missouri River that flooded in western Iowa. While the 2012 Farm Bill needs to address Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) as it funds the technical assistance and rehabilitation of farmland after a natural disaster, more conservation practices installed before a disaster may protect our valuable resources from disaster. In the spirit of making the most economical choice, Congress should adequately fund conservation today to avoid the increased costs of repair in the future.

Nutrition Title

As a farmers' market vendor I participate in the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program that provides fresh, locally grown produce to low income seniors at the farmers' markets. This program has increased the profitability of producers and is appreciated by the consumers. Each year I have inquiries from senior citizens on how to obtain vouchers and I have observed how the seniors frugally utilize them to stretch throughout the season. As Iowa's population is aging, I am seeing more demand for participation in the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program as well as an increasing need per person. In these economic times, seniors with fixed incomes are having difficulties in eating nutritiously. Just as good nutrition helps all of us maintain good health, it would be cost effective to help these seniors eat more fresh fruits and vegetables for better nutrition to keep them healthy.

I also participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) utilizing an electronic bank transfer (EBT) wireless machine at the farmers' markets. Many of the farmers' market vendors who tried this program at the onset have discontinued due to the cost of transactions for SNAP. A client could buy a \$.35 zucchini making the

transaction fees higher than the purchase. A vendor actually would lose money after paying the monthly fees and transaction fees that are not allowed to be reimbursed. If all the costs and transaction fees involving the SNAP could be reimbursed, more vendors would participate in the program. However, it may not be cost effective as I have had a month where the monthly fees were higher than the total sales for SNAP as well. It would take more consumer education to make this program more beneficial to all concerned.

Horticulture Title

Specialty crops are an important part of agriculture that allow farmers to diversify. Specialty Crop Block Grants try to help increase the competitiveness of specialty crops. In our state they have supported educational efforts on food safety, research, and marketing efforts that encourage consumers to choose locally grown products. I have written and received grants for two organizations, the Mississippi Valley Growers' Association, Inc. and the Iowa Farmers' Market Association. I have also served on the grant review board in our state. The grant process needs to be simplified so that more farmers' markets may access funds for marketing efforts at their local level to encourage consumers to buy fresh produce. These markets are the front lines in the direct marketing of specialty crops. The current grant process has become more difficult for a farmers' market to obtain. A professional grant writer and/or administrator is needed so universities and other organizations with access to grant writers are more likely to apply and consequently, receive the grants.

Conclusion

Many farm bill programs have an impressive success rate. A strong conservation title is important for production agriculture. NRCS and SWCDs are the key delivery system at the local level. The availability of program funding and CTA allow the implementation of conservation practices as long-term investments in the protection of our natural resources.

Farm policy must consider the growing consumer interest in fresh, healthy, local food and provide access for the low income population. Specialty crop producers need a mix of programs aimed at enhancing profitability and an innovative marketing strategy to promote specialty crops and to educate consumers. The importance of passing the farm bill before break allows agencies to be prepared and producers to plan and make informed business decisions.

The Chairman. Thank you.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

Mr. Asay, let us visit for a moment. You not only are a producer of feed grains, but you are a consumer of feed grains. And one of the issues that has come up time and time again in my home area in the northwestern half of Oklahoma is the question about having enough grain for beef cattle and pork and poultry operations. Tell me what your observations in the last few years have been. Are we meeting the demand, along with our needs for energy production, are we meeting the demand of our livestock industries in this country?

Mr. Asay. Mr. Chairman, the last 2 years, we have had some tight carryovers. There have been some concerns for pork producers at times about feed availability. We have made it through the last couple of years without any major problems. Pork producers have done a lot of change in diets, use a lot of DDGS to substitute for corn and soybean meal in the diets to help get through in these periods and help make the adjustments needed. But there is still concern that sometimes if we have an extremely short crop that the availability of feedstuffs may be limited if we do not have some kind of adjustment in the fuel standard.

The Chairman. Putting your other hat on, Mr. Asay, as a grain producer as well as a feeder, the number of acres in the CRP program, I think reflecting grain prices in the re-enrollments, are coming down slowly. Does that concern you as a grain producer if your fellow farmers around the country are taking the signal it is time to produce more and putting some higher quality land back into production?

Mr. Asay. It ultimately could put some pressure on the grain prices, but the market is the one making the decision for producers to bring that out, so I believe it is reacting to market factors.

The Chairman. Since CRP is, after all, a voluntary participation program you bid into and stay with a 10 year contract.

Let us touch on one other subject, Mr. Asay, and then I will turn to some of your colleagues on the panel.

You mentioned H.R. 3798. Some folks describe that as a bill attempting to take a negotiated agreement between a trade group

in one region and an animal rights group, and impose it on the rest of the country. Is that a fair assessment?

Mr. Asay. I would agree on that assessment. It's fairly scary to producer animals to have two groups try to set some standards on a regulatory issue. I would rather see market factors influence how animals were raised in this country.

The Chairman. Fair enough.

Mr. Williams, in your statement, you discuss the importance of having a reference price and a plug yield built into any revenue-based program. Could you expand a little bit more on that, why that matters?

Mr. Williams. The reason it matters is because if you have consecutive bad years, 3 or 4 bad years of either drought or excessive wet weather, as your yields, your personal yields go down, every year your guarantees keep going down. So the plug yield would be something like a county T-yield or something of that nature, and the price would be somewhere along the revenue price of the crop insurance yield that would be there to coordinate with the plug yields to keep your dollar--your revenue guarantees level.

The Chairman. Thank you for that very clear and understandable explanation for the record. This is a topic being much discussed in the hallways of Congress these days.

Ms. Weber, you mentioned conservation and your involvement. I must tell you as a Member of Congress who represents the part of the great country that probably was more centered in Mr. Steinbeck's book in the 1930s than any other--and we will not discuss what we think of that in northwest Oklahoma, but that is a whole different subject--we too are very fond of voluntary conservation programs. We too are very fond of the upstream flood control programs and are very focused on rehabilitating those structures. The chief challenge we have, as was alluded to several times today, is with the number of dollars available to us coming down, the tough decisions that we have to make to meet our part of the overall deficit reduction efforts that the United States House is prioritizing.

Could you expand for just a moment on why, as you so clearly pointed out in your testimony, why conservation is a long-term investment that benefits not just tomorrow but decades from now?

Ms. Weber. The key word right now is----

The Chairman. And that is called baiting a witness actually, for the record.

[Laughter.]

Ms. Weber. The key word is sustainability; whether it is in specialty crops or other types of production agriculture, sustainability. The only way you are going to have sustainability is if you have that good topsoil to produce the product. And if it is going downstream in weather-related events and causing hypoxia in the Gulf and whatever, we are not going to have sustainability. We have to keep the ground where it is, you have to keep the rain where it falls in order to have sustainability and good production agriculture.

The Chairman. Well put. If I did not know better, I would think you were a constituent of the 3rd District of Oklahoma.

I now turn to the outstanding--my time has expired--to the gentleman from Iowa for his 5 minutes. Mr. Boswell.

Mr. Boswell. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. It has been an interesting presentation. Thank you all very, very much. I told the Chairman I would give up some of my time to continue that last question about conservation compliance and so on. So you may want to comment about that.

But I think that is an interesting point there, Ms. Weber, and I appreciate you coming here representing, seems to me like reading your statement, all aspects of agriculture really, not just one--specialty crops and production farms and so on at your family operation.

Kind of brings out the point we may have said earlier, I have said so often, we are not making more land, we are just making a lot more people and how are we going to take care of that as we go down the road. And I think you are kind of thinking about that apparently from what you have said.

I go back to you, Mr. Howell, you talk about your family operation and so on and wanting to take some of your program land out to put it in specialty crop. We have not had a lot of discussion about that, but I have a feeling that quite a few Members of our Committee would probably object to that, but I do not know that, we have not talked about it I do not think, have we, Mr. Chairman, at all? So this is an interesting point.

It seems to me like if I go back to my days when we were

starting farmers' markets and so on, that this was one way to get people to grow specialty crops. They were not going to have somebody like me at that time, it was about all I could do, capable of doing, to row crop. But a lot of people said well, I think I will set this 20 acres aside and use my equipment and I will just produce a whole lot of onions or a whole lot of this or a whole lot of that. Kind of got that situation stated. So we may have a whole new discussion going on here, I do not know.

You have been raising tomatoes a long time and you make your point: how do we not go back, we are bumping heads again, Mr. Chairman, where we have people wanting to do different types--what I have said, there is room for everybody because of the population growth and need for food. How do we do that?

Mr. Howell. Well, it was not an issue until the 2002 Farm Bill, when they made soybeans one of the program crops. Before that, we used the soybean ground and we were free to use that for production of vegetables. When they changed that and added that in as a program crop, that is when it went out of hand. So it is not really--it is a relatively current short-term problem, but it needs to be rectified.

Mr. Boswell. Let us just dialogue for a minute, maybe it is a short-term problem and it will solve itself, I do not know. It is interesting, I guess we may hear more about it if this is indicative of what we will hear in other places. But you know, the farmers' markets have become a very successful thing, and to start out it was just seasonal and now a lot of places it is year round. And I am not sure how they get the produce there in all cases, but nevertheless, it is very, very popular. People want it, obviously. And then we see what the market is for corn, beans, wheat and so on. There does not seem to be any problem there, particularly as we have some of it going into fuels, alternatives, and that nature. I am just not sure how we get there without destroying something that I think across the country they are pretty proud of, and that is people that are going out and doing the fruits and vegetables and bringing it to town and selling it fresh on the farmers' market.

Mr. Howell. I have to apologize, I am not sure I understand exactly where you are going. If you are thinking I am against my colleague to the left---

Mr. Boswell. I am not sure either.

Mr. Howell.--I would like to have that part eliminated for both the fresh and the processing and I think that would be fine. And my suggestion is if you take direct payments away, why there is really no incentive, in my view, to keep that restriction on. Again, it just happened in the 2002 Farm Bill when they did that.

Mr. Boswell. Ms. Weber, would you care to make any comment in this discussion?

Ms. Weber. Basically, for specialty crop producers--let me take for an example a muscatine grower in Iowa that produces watermelons. They need a 10 year change on the crop. I mean with most of things we grow, there is maybe a 3 year rotation. So you have to have other acreage to rotate it with. So they are renting other people's property and like he is saying, without the soybean ground to rotate to, if that was not clear, he did not have that ground to rotate to any more because that was part of the program. Is it that it?

Mr. Howell. Well, that is part of it. We have to be responsible growers, we have to rotate our crops and so we have to have 3 years out before we can grow a tomato crop. And so we need--I am not sure where the discussion is going again, but we need to have that extra ground to--soybeans and corn in a way, even though we raise a lot of them, are a vehicle to allow us to raise the corn and soybeans and then when you penalize the landowners for letting us grow those vegetable crops, nobody is going to win.

Mr. Boswell. I yield back.

The Chairman. The gentleman yields back. And I would note, if you listen to my friends on both the left and the right, the direct payment issue may take care of itself soon.

With that, I recognize the gentleman from Texas for 5 minutes.

Mr. Conaway. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Davis, I appreciate your opening comments reflective of what a food shortage would look like, because most Americans take it for absolute granted that--well first off, most Americans think food just shows up at the grocery store by magic. They do not appreciate the hard work and sweat equity and the risks that you and your colleagues on the panel and I

suspect most folks in this room, take every day and every year. There is this reliance that you put on a rational, fully resourced safety net working constantly in terms of trying to figure out what the best one is and it is in a constant state of flux.

Previous hearings, we have had people talk about farm labor, we talked a little bit about child labor, but farm labor in general. None of you mentioned that in your testimony. Are you adequately, have a workforce that is adequate to meet your needs, and that is not an issue in your area? Any of you?

Mr. Davis. Myself, with my family operation, both my children are becoming involved with the operation. My son has grown up on the farm and is now home today taking care of things while I am here with you.

I think we need, for continuation of development of ability to create something, we need that early training program. We send our children to school when they are 5 and 6 and 4 even but now we are saying that a child cannot learn how to work until they are 16 or 18.

Mr. Conaway. I guess I was asking comments for adults, maybe the specialty crop guys, Mr. Howell and Ms. Weber, do you have an adequate workforce to harvest your crops at the right points in time?

Mr. Howell. No, sir. I think that is a problem with all of agriculture, if you really look under the covers. If you think about the seed industry where detasseling is done, if you think about the meat processing area where there is need for workers, livestock producers in the confinement facilities. There is a bad shortage, significant shortage and growing shortage of people able and willing to do the work. And I know it is not you gentlemen's responsibility in this Committee, but the whole issue of the undocumented workers and the immigration policies is really presenting a problem particularly for the horticulture, but across the board. And it is a train wreck getting ready to happen. Everybody wants to play by the rules and we do play by the rules, but there is a problem that we just need to face up to and provide us with an adequate supply of documented labor one way or another through a program that will let us harvest the crops. In the southern states, Georgia and those areas, and the Arizona issues, there are problems on both sides. But agriculture is running out of hand labor.

Mr. Conaway. Can anybody give us an example of where--the regulatory burden that you have to cope with. We can all talk about regulations, but specific regulations that you are having to deal with that are either new and/or antiquated that cost you money and can you give us some specificity with respect to those regulations that you think are no longer necessary or were not necessary to begin with?

Mr. Davis. Regulations, one that comes to mind, I understand that the Secretary has taken this under advisement to make a change right now, but something as simple as a cover crop on cropland. That if I do not plant a program crop to that cropland as its first crop, it becomes ineligible for program payments. So if I was to seed a rye grass crop on a cornfield and when I went into my FSA office to sign up for a farm program, that I would state that I have it seeded to rye now as a cover crop, that becomes my crop acreage for that year. Also, vegetables are ineligible, there are cover crops in turnips and radishes right now that are very beneficial to the ground, great reduction in the necessity of tillage, but because those crops are planted, it technically makes those crops ineligible for farm program payments, just based on the rules. So that is one regulation.

Another regulation that does come into play that I and my family, we work closely with my in-laws, I am allowed to have my children operate machinery on my farm, but I cannot have my nephew come onto my farm and operate the same machine, even though he has the same experience, because we do not have the same relationship.

Another area that has come into mind of regulations, workmen's comp back on the farm has become a serious consideration for me if I bring in outside labor. That is more of a state issue with the Illinois workmen's comp law, but that is another regulation that is coming.

And also, additionally--we could go on and on--but spraying of farm pesticides looks to be an issue that is coming to a head here very shortly that will restrict me.

Mr. Conaway. Thanks.

It would be interesting, Mr. Chairman, if we could find who in the Department of Labor actually wrote the farm labor laws,

rules and regulations, to see if they have ever even been on a farm or could spell farm.

(Laughter.)

Mr. Conaway. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Hultgren for 5 minutes, please.

Mr. Hultgren. Thanks again, Mr. Chairman.

I mentioned a little bit earlier just the gratitude that I have had of working with our Senators, I mentioned a couple people from Senator Kirk's office. Also, it has been a privilege to work with Senator Durbin's office. I also wanted to recognize I think Brad Middleton and also Bart Ellefritz are here from Senator Durbin's office. So thank you so much. Also glad that our acting Director of Agriculture, a good friend of mine, former colleague in the Illinois House, Bob Flider is also here as well, so thank you so much for being here today, and all your work.

Again, I want to thank the panel for your information, it has been very helpful.

A few questions. Mr. Williams, I wondered if you could--you have expressed in your testimony frustration over both the SURE and the ACRE programs. I wondered if you would be able to elaborate a little bit on these issues and speak to how you might recommend that we could simplify these and make them more beneficial, more useful.

Mr. Williams. With the ACRE program, as I understand it, back--and I also alluded to the fact that I remember back in the 1980s when the prices were very low, the ACRE program would have worked very well. But we have been blessed to have more exports so our prices have risen higher, the ACRE program just was not feasible, it did not pay the producer.

My experience with the SURE program, we have been paid throughout that. Whenever you get a yield loss and you draw crop insurance revenue from we will say 2008 crop year, then you will come back in 2009 and receive payment through SURE the following year. In my personal case, we farm in two counties, we did have a SURE loss in Hamilton County, but the crop was so great in White County that it kicked out the Hamilton County loss that was ineligible. To me--a lot of our landlords carry crop insurance as well and so because we were blessed to have a great crop in one county, but we were unfortunate in another county, the county that had the loss, we should have received the payment on that. And to me, that does not seem right. I realize the average was there and for us farming in both counties, we were all right. But the landlords were penalized because of our success in the other county. So to me, that was not very fair or equitable.

Mr. Hultgren. Thank you.

Mr. Asay, you spoke about the importance of developing a disease surveillance system and the work that the pork industry has done in conjunction with USDA's APHIS and also Centers for Disease Control. I wonder if you might be able to talk a little bit about the Comprehensive and Integrated Surveillance System and give us an update on your progress on that.

Mr. Asay. We are working to try to update the system. There is a lot of work that has been done in the event a foreign animal disease does come to this country, as to what agencies have jurisdiction over various aspects. At one point, it was thought that we would destroy the animals and then bury those animals to try to control disease, but we have seen in other countries that has not worked--England and South Korea, for example. If we were to bury animals, we would have to get okay from the EPA at those sites, that those sites could handle that. So now it looks like we have to vaccinate and control with vaccine the disease. First off, you would have to have enough vaccine for that disease on hand to control that. And also you would have to live with the disease for a number of years in order to get it under control again.

But we are working, trying to get all the agencies to work together and I believe right now, the first agency that would have control would be the Department of Homeland Security to make sure it was not a terrorist act. And after they ensure that, then it goes on to the next one. So there are a lot of steps involved, a lot of agencies involved, a very complicated matter.

Mr. Hultgren. I wonder if you could give us an update on the pilot program USDA has been running with hog producers called the Livestock Gross Margin, LGM.

Mr. Asay. Okay. Actually there was a pilot program created

in Iowa a few years ago, in 2008 it expanded to some other states and last year it just expanded to the 48 continental states. It was set up--it is a program that uses futures prices to set the expected margins and uses the price of the hogs minus the cost of the feed with various formulas, and ensures that margin there. That is the concept, and it works for producers at times. It has helped in the management but there is a lot of cost involved in this and we would like to see some changes where it can insure larger operations and, as I mentioned, there were 200,000 hogs insured in the past year. I personally worked with producers to sell about 10 to 15 percent of that insurance. It has been a struggle working with agencies sometimes to try to clarify things also on this product.

Mr. Hultgren. My time has expired. I did just want to mention real quickly, Mr. Howell, I appreciate your information and discussion on the Farming Flexibility Act of 2011, 2012, H.R. 2675. I know I am a cosponsor along with Congressman Schilling and Congressman Johnson here from Illinois, and I know that would be something very beneficial to Midwestern farmers and Midwestern families.

So my time is up, but thank you so much for the discussion. We certainly will be talking about that some more.

Mr. Asay. Well, thank you for your help.

Mr. Hultgren. I yield back.

The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired.

The chair now recognizes for the final 5 minutes of questions, the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Schilling.

Mr. Schilling. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

What I would also like to point out is that what is nice about the Agriculture Committee is that this is truly a red, white, and blue Committee, it is not Democratic or Republican. And also, a good friend of ours, Lieutenant Governor Simon has a couple of her folks here, Christina Rogers and Laura Kissell, we appreciate them being here today also.

I want to go back to Gary, your comment here on a question that Mr. Hultgren was asking. Do you have some suggestions on how Congress can strengthen the Livestock Gross Margin insurance?

Mr. Asay. Okay, there are various aspects there. I just recently learned that the loss ratio on the LGM has been in the neighborhood of .33 to .37. There were some changes this year in the crop insurance program to try to get corn and soybeans closer to the 1.00 loss ratio. If we can somehow get that loss ratio improved, that would improve the aspects of the producer making that work for them to actually better protect them for the premium invested in that.

Also, one other aspect: This insurance is only available on the last Friday, business Friday, every month from approximately 4:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m., the following Saturday. Not many crop insurance agents or producers want to mess with trying to figure out the margin and the premium on the weekend. That has been a limiting factor also.

Mr. Schilling. Very good.

And then can you further tell the story of conservation and its part of your operation? Can you basically elaborate further on how programs such as EQIP can be strengthened for us?

Mr. Asay. Yes. I have benefitted from EQIP funds in the past, it has helped me invest in manure-hauling equipment. The manure spreader that I use has a controller on it and a monitor where I can control how much manure, how many gallons go on per acre. I also test the soil and the manure for an analysis and use the crop usage to determine how much manure I apply. It has also helped me with windbreaks on the farm to try to protect the wind from blowing through. Also for manure containment facilities. I think it is a very good program out there and we possibly need to look in some areas to expand a little bit to better help livestock producers.

Mr. Schilling. Very good.

And then, Mr. Davis, recently, there was a nice article in the Galesburg Register-Mail where a local farmer, David Serven, who actually is here today, said "Crop insurance to me is the safety net we need to keep there." I am hearing this from the majority of farmers that I talk to.

My time is almost up, but what are your thoughts on strengthening crop insurance here in Illinois, sir?

Mr. Davis. The thoughts of Mr. Asay there on the realignment of the loss ratio I think would be very beneficial to crop insurance usage here in Illinois. My county and my own instance, my loss ratio is .25. If 1.0 is loss equals payback for the premium I am paying, I am paying substantially more for

my insurance than I ever hope to be able to get back because I do have a low loss. So if that could be addressed.

Another area is if, as I heard mentioned here just a moment ago, that direct payments might be curtailed in some way, shape, or form, there does need to be a safety net somewhere and if this crop insurance program is an area where we could regain that footing to put in that floor for support, the most important thing is that crop gets raised next year, not the crop you are raising this year that is lost, but raising that crop next year.

Mr. Schilling. Very good.

With that, I yield back my time, Chairman.

The Chairman. The gentleman yields back his time. The time has expired for this panel.

Before we adjourn, I would like to invite Mr. Boswell, followed by Mr. Schilling, to make any closing comments or remarks that they might have. Mr. Boswell.

Mr. Boswell. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I kind of measure how did I think things go on if I had what I know right now, would I have come to this meeting. Yes, I would.

It has been good to be here in Galesburg and Carl Sandburg College. I want to thank all of you for participating today and it has been meaningful. I think our staff has got a lot of notes we are going to have to digest but it has been worth coming here and, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for this and Mr. Schilling for being our host, I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

The Chairman. The gentleman yields back and I now recognize our host, Congressman Schilling, for any closing remarks he might have.

Mr. Schilling. Yes, I truly want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for just recognizing the great Midwest for who we are, and just giving us the opportunity to have what I call the final 3 feet, the farmer to actually have their say. I think one of the most important things that we look at is from the Midwest and across the country when it comes to ag is that we want the farmers to have the input. We do not want folks that have really nothing to do with farming making the decisions on how the farm bill is going to come out.

And I think the biggest take-away that I got today out of this is that, number one, we need a 5 year bill so that we can give certainty to our farmers and allow them to just know what cards are on the table and then, number two, I think of course is the strong crop insurance.

But I just want to thank everyone who participated, the folks that set up, also the Agriculture Committee, the folks from Washington that took time out to be with us today. But just want to say thank you very much, everyone.

The Chairman. The gentleman yields back his time and I would recognize myself to note that I appreciate not only Congressman Schilling, but both of your Illinois Members, for the good work that they do on the Committee. And of course, our friends at Carl Sandburg College for hosting and helping work with us to make this possible, and the community for turning out today to listen to what some folks outside of rural America consider to be the least exciting topic, but yet it is the most important subject matter for all of our futures and all of our children's futures.

And with that again, let me state one more time for the record, that anyone may submit comments to be considered as a part of the Committee's farm bill field hearing record, this will be a part of the permanent record. Comments submitted to the address agriculture.house.gov/farmbill by May 20, 2012 will be incorporated in a permanent part of the record. It is important that we have not just our expert witnesses today, but everyone out there who is interested put their stake into this process.

With that, I would also note that we, working as a Committee together, have a very challenging process ahead of us. We intend to get you a farm bill that we can all support, that you can live with, that maybe you will not just survive but have a chance to thrive with. But it is going to be a challenging process. It is going to be a very challenging process.

And with that, under the rules of the Committee, the record of today's hearing will remain open for 30 calendar days to receive additional material and supplemental written responses from the witnesses to any question posed by a Member.

This hearing of the Committee on Agriculture is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:25 a.m. (CDT), the Committee was

adjourned.]

THE FUTURE OF U.S. FARM POLICY: FORMULATION OF THE 2012 FARM BILL

FRIDAY, MARCH 30, 2012

House of Representatives,
Committee on Agriculture,
State University, AR.

The Committee met, pursuant to call, at 9:00 a.m. (CDT), in the Riceland Hall, Arkansas State University, 201 Olympic Drive, State University, Arkansas, Hon. Frank D. Lucas [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Members present: Representatives Lucas, Neugebauer, Stutzman, and Crawford.

Staff present: Bart Fischer, Josh Mathis, Matt Schertz, Debbie Smith, Heather Vaughan, John Konya, Nathaniel Fretz, Anne Simmons, and Jamie Mitchell

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. FRANK D. LUCAS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM OKLAHOMA

The Chairman. This hearing of the Committee on Agriculture entitled, The Future of U.S. Farm Policy: Formulation of the 2012 Farm Bill, will come to order.

Good morning, and thank you all for joining us today for this farm bill field hearing--which is a very important distinction, I might add. And I would like to thank Congressman Crawford for hosting us today.

These field hearings are a continuation of what my good friend and Ranking Member Collin Peterson started in the spring of 2010. Today, we will build upon the information we gathered in those hearings, as well as the 11 farm policy audits we conducted this past summer. We used those audits as an opportunity to thoroughly evaluate farm programs to identify areas where we can improve efficiency. The field hearings serve a slightly different purpose. Today, we are here to listen.

I talk to producers all the time back home in Oklahoma. I see them in the feed store, I meet with them at my town hall meetings and, of course, I get regular updates from my personal boss, Linda Lucas, back on the farm. But the conditions and crops in Oklahoma are different than what you will find here in Arkansas.

In New York, we heard how specialty crop producers and dairy producers utilize farm programs. In Illinois, we heard about the importance of crop insurance for corn and soybean producers. Today, we will hear from a wide variety of producers from across the Southeast. I expect we will hear a different perspective than we got in the Northeast and the Midwest. That is why it is so important that we offer a choice of policy options. The broad range of agricultural production makes our country strong, but it also creates challenges when we are trying to write a single farm bill to support so many different regions and commodities.

While each sector has unique concerns when it comes to farm policy, I would like to share some of my general goals for the next farm bill. First and foremost, I want to give producers the tools to help you do what you do best and that is produce the safest, most abundant, most affordable food supply in the world. To do this, we must develop a farm bill that works for all regions and all commodities.

I recognize that the challenges that you face here in the Southeast are different than the conditions facing producers in Illinois or New York. I also recognize that even within commodities, different programs work better for different regions. That is why it is vitally important that the commodity title give producers options so they can choose the program that best works for them.

I am also committed to a strong crop insurance program. Now I know that crop insurance, while a valuable tool for many producers, does not work as well for producers down here. That is why offering an array of programs is important and why we must work with the Risk Management Agency to improve crop insurance products for rice, peanuts and other crops that do not have higher buyout levels.

Last, we will work to ensure that producers can continue

using conservation programs to protect natural resources. I am interested to hear how producers in this area of the country use the conservation programs. I am particularly curious as to your thoughts about how to simplify the process so they are easier for farmers and ranchers to use.

Beyond those priorities, I know there are a number of universal concerns facing agriculture across the country. For instance, my producers in Oklahoma are worried about regulations coming down from the Environmental Protection Agency and how they must comply with those regulations. I am also aware that the death tax is creating difficulties for farming operations. I want to hear how these Federal policies are affecting producers here.

Today, we will hear from a selection of producers. Unfortunately, we do not have time to hear from everyone who would like to share their perspective. But we have a place on our website where you can submit those comments in writing to be added to the record. You can visit agriculture.house.gov/farmbill, to find that form. And you can also find an address on the postcards available on the tables that are here.

As I said before, we do not have an easy road ahead of us, but I am confident that by working together, we can craft a farm bill that continues to support the success story that is American agriculture.

And with that, I would like to recognize our host for any opening comments he might make. The gentleman from Arkansas, Mr. Crawford.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ERIC A. "RICK" CRAWFORD, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM ARKANSAS

Mr. Crawford. I thank the Chairman.

I want to start by acknowledging our FFA chapters that are here, and if I could get them to stand. The chapters that we have checked in are Batesville, Weiner, Harrisburg and Manila. Thank y'all. This is the future of agriculture.

[Applause.]

Mr. Crawford. Thank you for being here, good morning, and thank all of you for joining us. We are pleased to have this third of four farm bill hearings here in Arkansas. Great honor to be here and we are very thankful to our Committee Chairman and to the Members who have taken time to come and participate--Congressman Neugebauer from Texas and Congressman Stutzman from Indiana, all of whom are my colleagues on the Agriculture Committee.

As we know, agriculture is the number one industry in our district here in the First District of Arkansas--from the Delta, cotton, rice, soybeans, wheat, peanuts and aquaculture, and up into the Ozarks, poultry, cattle, dairy, timber products. Annually, agriculture in Arkansas is a \$16 billion economic juggernaut, employing over 260,000 Arkansans. And like every industry, Arkansas agriculture comes with a fair share of risk and uncertainty.

In these tough economic times, farmers and ranchers know the impact of high fuel prices as an input cost. When fuel costs rise, farmers feel the pinch more than most. Farmers also deal with uncertainty caused by unpredictable weather, volatile markets and a continued need for investments in technology. On top of all those challenges, farmers are constantly wrestling with a myriad of regulations coming from Washington and no agency embodies that better than the Environmental Protection Agency. Farmers in our district live off the land, they raise their families and earn an honest living by taking care of our natural resources. If anyone understands the importance of preserving our environment for future generations, it is certainly those who derive their livelihood from the land on which they live, and from the water that they use.

With all the challenges our agriculture community already faces, they should not have to worry about burdensome new regulations that only serve to cripple American agriculture. Sound farm policy must incorporate all the tools that America's farmers and ranchers need to continue to produce the world's safest, most abundant and affordable food supply, and the 2012 Farm Bill must take that into account. It also must take into account the diverse models of production throughout the United States. Unlike what some of my colleagues in Congress may think, there is no one-size-fits-all policy that will work. Agriculture here in Arkansas, and across the South, is vastly different than say Iowa or Illinois. And therefore, we need carefully crafted policy that accounts for the differences in

cost, risk and production models. I know I am preaching to choir here and we are not here to do the talking, we are here to do the listening. So with that, I want to just really quickly acknowledge some of the witnesses that are from Arkansas and I am proud to represent them in Congress.

I will start by welcoming Dow Brantley from England, Arkansas; Mississippi County producer Randy Veach; representing the cattle industry, cattle producer Dan Stewart from Mountain View, Arkansas; Mike Freeze is an aquaculture producer from Keo, Arkansas; and last but not least, a friend of mine, cotton farmer, also an ASU grad, David Hundley.

We are pleased to welcome each of you. Thank all of you for being here, and we look forward to this hearing. With that, I yield back to the Chairman.

The Chairman. The gentleman yields back.

The chair would request that other Members submit their opening statements for the record so that the witnesses may begin their testimony and to ensure that there is ample time for questions.

With that, I would like to welcome our first panel of witnesses to the table. Mr. L. Dow Brantley, rice, cotton, corn, and soybean producer, Brantley Farming Company, England, Arkansas; Mr. Randy Veach, cotton, rice, corn, wheat, and soybean producer, Manila, Arkansas; Mr. Paul T. Combs, rice, soybean, cotton, corn, and wheat producer, Sunrise Land Company, Kennett, Missouri; Mr. Bowen Flowers, cotton, corn, soybean, wheat, and rice producer, Clarksdale, Mississippi; and Mr. Burch, cotton and peanut producer, Burch Farms, Newton, Georgia. Clearly, gentlemen, you are a diverse bunch of producers.

With that, Mr. Brantley, please begin whenever you are ready.

STATEMENT OF L. DOW BRANTLEY, RICE, COTTON, CORN, AND SOYBEAN
PRODUCER, BRANTLEY FARMING COMPANY,
ENGLAND, AR

Mr. Brantley. Chairman Lucas and Members of the Committee, I would like to welcome you again to the State of Arkansas; and Congressman Crawford, thank you for convincing the Chairman that Jonesboro was the place to hold this hearing. Thank you again for holding this hearing on the reauthorization of the farm bill. I am honored to have the opportunity to offer testimony before the Committee----

The Chairman. Mr. Brantley, if you do not mind, swing that microphone towards you.

Mr. Brantley. Is that better?

I am honored to have the opportunity to offer testimony before the Committee concerning my views on current farm policy and the changes needed.

My name is Dow Brantley. My farm is located in central Arkansas near the community of England. We grow rice, cotton, corn, soybeans and I farm in partnership with my father, mother, two brothers and our families. Due to the hard work of my grandparents and parents, our family farm has grown from just a few hundred acres in 1946 to around 8,500 acres in row crop production today. I am pleased to serve as Chairman of the Arkansas Rice Federation and the Arkansas Rice Producers' Group as well as a board member for many other agribusiness associations in the state, but I offer my testimony today from my perspective as a farmer, and not on behalf of any one organization.

As I stated earlier, my farm is diversified, but rice is one of our primary focuses. It is worth noting that Arkansas grows rice on approximately 1.3 to 1.5 million acres each year, which is nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ of the entire U.S. rice crop. Rice product, transportation and processing play important roles in the state by providing thousands of jobs in what is referred to as the Mississippi River Delta. Rice is the state's second highest value commodity and the top agricultural export.

The bigger challenges facing the U.S. rice industry are challenges over which farmers have no control. They are decisions taken by governments--our own Federal Government and the governments of nations around the world. Some examples include:

Brazil's export program that provides \$60 per ton export subsidy for rice to Central America, Haiti, Nigeria and to the U.S.

Thailand's intervention price program is the equivalent of \$10.00 per bushel, while the U.S. market price, here in the

U.S., is around the \$6.00 per bushel range.

India, one of the world's top rice exporters, subsidizes the cost of fertilizer and other inputs for its farmers.

Iraq's unreasonable import specifications have contributed to a 77 percent drop in sales of U.S. rice to that country.

Access for U.S. rice was excluded from the so-called South Korea Free Trade Agreement because they consider it a sensitive crop.

China has yet to accept imports of U.S. rice as a result of China's lack of phytosanitary requirements.

And the U.S. Government continues an embargo that was put into place more than 50 years ago against trade with Cuba, once the number one export market for U.S. rice.

These trade policies and the increased cost of inputs, especially fuel and fertilizer, over which the U.S. farmer has no control, cannot be covered by a one-size-fits-all program.

The U.S. rice industry is seeking risk management tools that will allow rice farmers to secure their production loans and to repay loans should forces over which they have no control lead to an increase in input costs or decline in rice prices which makes U.S. rice less competitive.

Not providing such a policy option threatens not only U.S. farmers who grow rice, but thousands of Americans who transport, process and market U.S. rice across the nation and around the world.

Crop insurance as a whole has not worked on my farm or many others like ours in Arkansas. Our farm is 100 percent irrigated, and on average our yields are very consistent. Our financial problems occur with higher production costs due to irrigation or as a result of a weather event in the fall that disrupts our harvest and affects the quality of our crops. These circumstances cannot be hedged.

I believe Congress should reauthorize the farm bill this year for at least 5 years.

I understand that the budget situation facing this Committee is a key consideration in the development of the farm bill. These budget pressures, coupled with the outcome of the U.S.-Brazil WTO case means some farm policies must be modified to satisfy both budget constraints and specific trade objectives.

Some key components of the farm bill should be maintaining planting flexibility that began with the 1996 Farm Bill and the countercyclical policies that have been in place for more than a decade now.

Given the aforementioned budget pressures and other considerations facing Congress, I believe that the following priorities represent the needs of producers for crops here in the Mid-South:

First, the trigger levels for assistance should be updated to provided tailored and reliable help should commodity prices decline below today's production cost and should include a floor or reference price to protect multi-year low price scenarios.

Second, as payments would only be made in loss situations, payment limits and means tests for producers should be eliminated, or at a minimum not tightened any further.

And third, the Federal Crop Insurance Program should be improved to be a more effective risk management for all crops in all production regions, beginning with the policy development process.

We support the funding of our land-grant universities through the research title, particularly the formula funding like the Hatch and Smith-Lever Acts that enable our universities to deliver initiatives that are so important to our states.

In summary, I appreciate the work of this Committee in crafting the 2008 Farm Bill, and more recently the recommendations developed last fall with your counterparts in the Senate. I know developing this next farm bill will present its own set of challenges, especially from inadequate budget authority and international trade obligations.

Based on my experience in working with the rice and cotton industries and the Arkansas Farm Bureau, I know they will work closely with this Committee to ensure that we have an effective farm policy. It is critical that we maintain provisions that allow us to be competitive in world markets and provide support in these times of low prices.

Thank you for the opportunity for me to present my views today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Brantley follows:]

Prepared Statement of L. Dow Brantley, Rice, Cotton, Corn, and Soybean
Producer, Brantley Farming Company, England, AR

Introduction

Chairman Lucas, Ranking Member Peterson, and Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this important hearing on the re-authorization of the farm bill. I am honored to have the opportunity to offer testimony before the Committee concerning my views on current farm policy and the changes needed.

My name is Dow Brantley. My farm is located in central Arkansas near the community of England. We grow rice, cotton, corn, and soybeans. I farm in partnership with my father, mother, two brothers and our families. Due to the hard work of my grandparents and parents, our family farm has grown from just a few hundred acres in 1946 to around 8,500 acres in row crop production today. I am pleased to serve as the Chairman of the Arkansas Rice Federation and the Arkansas Rice Producers' Group, as well as a board member for many other agribusiness associations in the state, but I offer my testimony today from my perspective as a farmer, and not on behalf of any one organization.

Industry Overview

As I stated earlier, my farm is diversified, but rice is one of our primary focuses. It is worth noting that Arkansas grows rice on approximately 1.3 to 1.5 million acres each year, which is nearly half of the entire U.S. rice crop. Rice production, transportation and processing play important roles in the state by providing thousands of jobs in what is referred to as the Mississippi River Delta. Rice is the state's second highest value commodity and the top agricultural export. Nationally, the U.S. rice industry contributes \$34 billion in annual economic activity. It provides jobs and income for not only rice producers and processors, but also for all involved in the value chain, contributing 128,000 jobs.

About 85 percent of all the rice that is consumed in the U.S. is produced domestically.

Despite significant trade barriers to exports, the U.S. remains the largest non-Asian exporter of rice and the third largest exporter worldwide.

Rice fields are flooded during the growing season to provide water that the plants need and to help control weeds. While drought during the growing season adds to the cost of maintaining the flood and certainly adds to the labor required to check irrigation pumps and keep levees intact, we do not lose a rice crop due to drought.

Global Challenges of U.S. Rice Industry

The bigger challenges facing the U.S. rice industry are challenges over which rice farmers have no control. They are decisions taken by governments--our own Federal Government and the governments of nations around the world. Here are some examples:

1. Brazil's PEP (Petrobras Environmental Program) program provides a \$60 per ton export subsidy for rice shipped to Central America, Haiti, Nigeria and to the U.S. All are traditional U.S. rice markets.
2. Thailand's Intervention Price is buying rice from Thai farmers at the equivalent of \$10 per bushel. The U.S. market price is in the \$6.00 per bushel range. And U.S. rice faces Thai rice in world markets every day.
3. India, one of the world's top rice exporters, subsidizes the cost of fertilizer and other inputs for its farmers.
4. Iraq's recent tender specifies rice varieties grown in Thailand and Vietnam, but not in the U.S. Thailand's unreasonable demands have led to a 77 percent drop in sales of U.S. rice to the country.
5. South Korean negotiators, at the eleventh hour, demanded that rice be excluded from the so-called Korea Free Trade Agreement because they considered rice a "sensitive crop." U.S. negotiators agreed to the exclusion.
6. China has yet to accept imports of U.S. rice as a result of China's lack of phytosanitary requirements.
7. Japan's desire to join the Trans Pacific Partnership has caused the rice industry to question the impact of the TPP on rice trade within that group of nations.
8. There have been no recent country updates as required by the WTO, which brings into question the level of engagement by the Administration in enforcing the trade issue.

9. While the U.S. has extended trade and travel status with Vietnam and China, countries which were our enemies in the 1960s and 1970s, we have not restored normal travel and trade relations with Cuba where the U.S. Government continues an embargo that was put into place more than 50 years ago.

The biggest risk to the U.S. rice industry is not crop failure, but our own government's trade policies and the trade policies of foreign governments, which are either condoned or ignored by our government. These trade policies and the increased costs of inputs, especially fuel and fertilizer, over which the U.S. rice farmer has no control, cannot be covered by a one size fits all farm policy.

The U.S. rice industry is seeking risk management tools that will allow rice farmers to secure their production loans and to repay the loans should forces over which they have no control lead to an increase in input costs or a decline in rice prices which make U.S. rice less competitive.

Not providing such a policy option threatens not only U.S. farmers who grow rice, but the thousands of Americans who transport, process and market U.S. rice across our nation and around the world.

2008 Farm Bill Review

The 2008 Farm Bill continued the traditional mix of policies consisting of the non-recourse marketing loan, loan deficiency payment, and the direct and countercyclical payment. While the countercyclical payment and marketing loan have been helpful in the past, they have recently been overwhelmed by the cost of production. If crop prices drop sharply most producers, including myself, will be in dire financial straits by the time these policies make payments. However, the marketing loan also plays a key role in the orderly marketing of crops for both producers and our marketing cooperatives, especially for rice and cotton. This policy should be continued without being encumbered by limitations on how much of a commodity a producer can place under loan. The direct payment, whatever its imperfections, has assisted rice producers in meeting the ongoing and serious price risk of farming in today's environment. It is a bit ironic that the Federal Government has been sending signals to the agriculture community that we should shift our policies towards those that are green box and WTO friendly, such as direct payments. The rice industry heeded those instructions in previous farm bills, and we, more than any other commodity, will be severely impacted by the loss of the direct payment unless Congress works with us to find a workable policy solution.

The new policies created in the 2008 Farm Bill included the addition of Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) as an alternative to countercyclical payments for producers who agree to a reduction in direct payments and marketing loan benefits. The bill also added Supplemental Revenue Assurance (SURE) as a standing disaster assistance supplement to Federal crop insurance.

The support mechanisms within ACRE do not provide an adequate farm policy for rice farmers or others in the Mid-South when compared to the DCP program. As evidence by the lack of sign ups, ACRE has not proven to be a viable alternative for Southern agriculture. In my home county, we have 1,650 producers, and not one has elected to choose ACRE. I understand that only one producer in the entire state of Arkansas has enrolled 20 acres in ACRE. Specifically, in the first year of ACRE signup, only eight rice farms, representing less than 900 acres, were enrolled nationwide. A one-size-fits-all policy will not work, but a regional or crop-based policy could provide the assurance that rice farmers will be able to endure the challenges they face.

SURE has provided little, if any, assistance to row crop producers, including those producers in the Mid-South who suffered significant monetary losses due to heavy rains and flooding occurring prior to and during harvest and spring flooding.

I recognize the challenge facing Congress to make improvements in this program. Without increased baseline spending authority, there will be no funds to continue the policy in the next farm bill much less make the necessary improvements for it to be an effective disaster relief mechanism. However, I do not support reallocating existing spending authority from current farm policy to apply to SURE.

Crop Insurance

Crop insurance, as a whole, hasn't worked on our farm or many others like ours in Arkansas. Our farm is 100 percent irrigated, and on average, our yields are very consistent. Our financial problems occur with higher production costs due to irrigation or as the result of a weather event in the fall that disrupts our harvest and affects the quality of our crops. These circumstances can't be hedged.

Conservation

My family has participated in several conservation initiatives over the years. Initiatives such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) have helped us conserve our natural resources and

become better stewards of the land. Conservation initiatives such as the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) can lead to improved environmental and conservation practices, however I believe that this program is not succeeding in the way it could. Of all the conservation initiatives offered by USDA, the CSP might have the most potential in terms of producing the desired environmental results that are beneficial to both the environment and the farmer. This initiative is a win-win for everyone, but it has been vastly under-funded. The CSP has been hampered by overly restrictive payment limitations contrived by USDA regulators, and I do not believe the statute supports the restrictions. Because the CSP regulations limit payments to an "agricultural operation" and because the payment limits are so low, most farmers do not have the opportunity to enroll all of their land, even if their land would otherwise be eligible. In order to enroll more land in CSP, a producer is required to have more than one agricultural operation. This is a very costly and inefficient way for a producer to operate (e.g., multiple loans, multiple operating accounts, multiple sets of operating records, etc.). Again, this probably has something to do with the level of funding, but it would seem to me that an initiative that produces benefits for both the environment and the producer would warrant more funding. With that being said, conservation initiatives should not serve as the primary delivery mechanism for farm policy and should not come at the expense of our farm policies.

Payment Limitations/Means Testing

The 2008 Farm Bill also made very substantial changes to the payment eligibility provisions, establishing an adjusted gross income (AGI) means test and, a very significant tightening of "actively engaged" requirements for eligibility. In my opinion, the USDA overstepped the intent of Congress in key payment eligibility provisions and issued regulations that are overly complicated and restrictive.

These changes have not only been expensive, but they have required our farm to make changes in our day-to-day operations that do not make good business sense. FSA's financing rules, active personal management rules and the decision by USDA to allow FSA and NRCS to operate under different actively engaged rules, are a few examples of the problems that we are facing. Sound farm policy provisions are of little value if commercial-size family farming operations are ineligible for benefits. While I oppose any artificial payment limitations, I advocate administering the current provisions within the intent of Congress and strongly oppose any further restrictions.

2012 Farm Bill

I believe Congress should reauthorize the farm bill this year.

I understand that the budget situation facing this Committee is a key consideration in the development of the farm bill. These budget pressures, coupled with the outcome of the U.S.-Brazil WTO case means some farm policies must be modified to satisfy both budget constraints and specific trade objectives.

Some key components of the farm bill should be maintaining planting flexibility that began with the 1996 Farm Bill and the countercyclical policies that have been in place for more than a decade now.

Given the aforementioned budget pressures and other considerations facing Congress, I believe that the following priorities represent the needs of producers for crops here in the Mid-South:

First, the trigger levels for assistance should be updated to provide tailored and reliable help should commodity prices decline below today's production costs, and should include a floor or reference price to protect in multi-year low price scenarios.

Second, as payments would only be made in loss situations, payment limits and means tests for producers should be eliminated, or at a minimum not tightened any further.

Third, Federal crop insurance should be improved to provide more effective risk management for all crops in all production regions, beginning with the policy development process.

Price Protection is Key

The development of farm policy should be focused on providing producers with price protection, not just for price moves during the growing year, but for multiple years of price declines as we saw occur in the late 1990's. Those that hold out crop insurance as the centerpiece of farm policy certainly don't understand the nature of farming in my area. Crop insurance can't, and it was not designed to, provide price protection across multiple years. Adequate price protection is the most critical component of the next farm bill and must be included in any policy option.

The first priority should be to concentrate on increasing the prices or revenue levels at which farm policy would trigger so that it is actually meaningful to producers, and would reliably trigger should

prices decline sharply.

The reference price for rice should be increased to \$13.98/cwt (\$6.30/bu). This level would more closely reflect the significant increases in production costs for rice on my farm. And this reference price should be a component of both the price-based option and the revenue-based option to ensure downside price protection.

The existing price trigger levels have simply not kept pace with the significant increases in production costs. It is for this reason that I believe strengthening U.S. farm policy would be helpful in ensuring that producers have the ability to adequately manage their risks and access needed credit.

Options for Different Production Regions

I believe that farm policy must be designed to give producers options of what policy will work best for a farmer based on our mix of crops and our growing region. I consider my farm to be rather diversified, growing four of the major program crops. We are fortunate to farm in an area where we have the ability to rotate among several crops. Not all production regions have that ability and may be limited to just one or two crops that can be profitably produced. Because of this great diversity across American agriculture we need policy options that I can use to tailor the best risk management tools possible on my farm.

Using rice as an example, here in the Mid-South I can rotate up to three other crops with my rice, whereas rice producers on the Gulf Coast have in most cases only one other crop rotation option, and yet in California rice producers have in most cases only one cropping choice, rice. Due to a host of differences in market prices, production costs, yields, marketing patterns, and uses, there is the potential for a properly designed revenue-based policy to work for rice growers in California, while I know that for my rice enterprise here in Arkansas I need a price-based policy. But I would like the opportunity to evaluate both price-based and revenue-based options for my other crops to see which will best fit my situation. Each crop has very different pricing and marketing options.

Plain and Bankable Policies

The current SURE has too many factors and is not tailored to the multiple business risks producers face--it is not plain. The current ACRE, while offering improved revenue-based protection, is complicated by requiring two loss triggers; providing payments nearly 2 years after a loss; and provides no minimum price protection--it is not bankable. The marketing loan and target prices are plain and bankable--unfortunately the trigger prices are no longer relevant to current costs and prices.

Planting Flexibility

Any commodity specific farm policy that is tied to planted acres must be designed with care so as to not create payment scenarios that incentivize farmers to plant for a farm policy. Whatever is done should accommodate history and economics and allow for proportional reductions to the baseline among commodities. Some commodities are currently more reliant on countercyclical farm policies (ACRE/CCP) while others are receiving only Direct Payments in the baseline. Generally, the least disruptive and fairest way to achieve savings across commodities would be to apply a percentage reduction to each commodity baseline and restructure any new policy within the reduced baseline amounts.

There have been concerns raised about higher reference prices distorting planting decisions and resulting in significant acreage shifts, including for rice. Based on my understanding of the reference price levels included in the Agriculture Committees' package last fall, a reference price for rice of \$13.98/cwt that is paid on historic CCP payment yields and on 85% of planted acres results in an effective price level well below my average cost of production, so I find it hard to imagine why I would plant simply due to this policy given these levels. As I have noted earlier, we have a very diverse cropping mix, and my planting decisions are based on a number of economic, agronomic, and marketing factors, but farm policy that sets support levels below costs of production is not a factor in planting decisions.

Research

We support the funding for our land-grant universities through the research title, particularly the formula funding like the Hatch and Smith-Lever that enable our universities to deliver initiatives so important to our states. These initiatives are not only matched 7:1 with state dollars but finance important efforts on key issues at the state level like herbicide resistance, water quality, profitable and sustainable production practices and 4-H.

Conclusion

In summary, I appreciate the work of this Committee in crafting the 2008 Farm Bill and, more recently, the recommendations developed last fall with your counterparts in the Senate. I know developing this next farm bill will present its own set of challenges especially from inadequate budget authority and international trade obligations.

Based on my experience in working with the rice and cotton industries and the Arkansas Farm Bureau, I know they will work closely with this Committee to ensure that we have an effective farm policy. It is critical that we maintain provisions that allow us to be competitive in world markets and provide support in times of low prices. Our industries will evaluate different delivery systems as necessary to accomplish these goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views today and I will be happy to respond to any questions.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Veach, you may proceed whenever you are ready.

STATEMENT OF RANDY VEACH, COTTON, RICE, CORN, WHEAT, AND SOYBEAN PRODUCER, MANILA, AR

Mr. Veach. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, and Congressman Crawford for bringing this field hearing here to Arkansas. We really appreciate the opportunity to testify before you.

I am a farmer from Mississippi County, Arkansas. I am a cotton, rice, soybean, wheat, and corn farmer, predominantly cotton. I farm with my wife, my son Brandon, and his wife. Brandon is a fourth generation farmer and we farm some land that my grandfather cleared and started farming. This is my 42nd crop, so I have been farming for a pretty good while.

I want to commend this Committee and for your leadership, Mr. Chairman, in putting forth a bill before the Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction. I think it needs to be noted that this was the only Committee that did put forth a bill, and we commend you on that.

I also serve as President of Arkansas Farm Bureau and I neglected to say that earlier.

We must, as a country, get our house back in order. And agriculture is ready to do our part. But we cannot balance our Federal budget on the backs of agriculture. We cannot cut our domestic support to the point where we lose our safety net. I believe that the farm bill should be crafted to benefit all sectors of agriculture. Farmers and ranchers risk it all every year to feed, clothe, and shelter our nation and the world.

It is also very important to have a good farm bill that will protect our rural communities. Our rural communities depend upon agriculture and agriculture depends upon our rural communities.

Commodity programs should take into consideration commodity and regional differences which, Mr. Chairman, you mentioned awhile ago. A one-size-fits-all approach will not work for all regions and all commodities.

Agriculture is our state's largest industry, as Congressman Crawford talked about. We bring an impact of more than \$9.4 billion, a direct impact, and then an indirect impact of \$16 billion. And 20 percent of all the jobs in the State of Arkansas are directly related to agriculture. Arkansas is number one in rice, number two in catfish and broilers, and number three in cotton.

Agriculture must have a workable risk management program. These programs consist of a combination of commodity programs and crop insurance. Historically, commodity programs provided price risk protection and crop insurance covered yield risk. In much of the South, our yield risk is mitigated by irrigation, about 80 percent of all row crops are irrigated in Arkansas. But this also greatly increases our input cost. That is the reason that crop insurance participation is lower in the Mid-South than other parts of the country. Arkansas agriculture needs a traditional program that provides price protection as well.

The current marketing loan program, with increased loan rates that reflect current prices, and a countercyclical program with higher target prices calculated on planted acres and current historic yields, would provide price protection.

Maintaining the marketing loan program is extremely beneficial to all crops. We use the marketing loan program extensively to help reach a higher price for our commodities, and cotton and rice use it very much. Prices are cyclical. I remember back in the 1970s I sold soybeans for \$12.00 a bushel. In 2001, we sold soybeans for \$4.00 a bushel. So prices are cyclical and we need that price protection.

2011 was a year of difficult and diverse weather. Flooding, followed by drought and again flooding. And Chairman Lucas, I think the drought was even more extensive in your state, and

the opportunity to irrigate is not as good as it is in our state.

Arkansas growers, through drought, did not have the losses that other states had, but we had a lot of losses due to flooding. That is another example that a one-size-fits-all program does not work effectively for our regions.

One point I wanted to make on flooding was that there is a gap that we have in flood insurance. Crops that are stored on-farm in storage in those facilities does not have the opportunity to have insurance protection. The Federal Government does not offer any protection for flooded grain in stored bins and private industry does not either. So this is something that needs to be addressed in the farm bill. I think that there was also not an opportunity for a lot of those producers to get the grain out of those bins and get them to the market so they could pay off their marketing loans. I think within Subtitle B, Marketing Assistance Loans and Loan Deficiency Payments, the Secretary should have the ability to extend the marketing assistance loans due to federally declared disasters.

You know, I know there is a public perception regarding direct payments. But I feel that I must caution you on an overnight elimination of this program, and what it would do to agricultural states' economy. For example, eliminating direct payments would have a \$243 million impact on Arkansas immediately, which is 1,952 jobs. This change will affect operating loans and rental agreements as well. Federal crop insurance alone will not replace the loss protection direct payments provide. Higher marketing loans--higher target prices will replace some of that money and some of that protection that will be lost by these direct payments.

We also support Congressman Peterson's bill when it comes to dairy that offers a voluntary gross margin insurance program. I think that we have also put one similar to this in the State of Arkansas in place, and it has worked very successfully. But I think this is also a reason that we need to get a farm bill this year.

Research: we oppose any cuts in research funding. Our increase in production is directly related to successful research and our land-grant universities do a tremendous job.

Conservation: we want to maintain the conservation practices and programs, current funding on that. EQIP, it is especially important that we maintain the current funding level in EQIP. EQIP is one of those programs that helps not only row crops but livestock production as well.

I will sum up by saying in conclusion, it is a benefit to our country to have a diverse agriculture industry. The farm bill should be crafted to support all sectors of agriculture.

I appreciate the hard work of this Committee to ensure that farmers and ranchers have a safety net that works for their region and their commodity during times of decreased prices and difficult weather, and allows our farmers to continue to provide the safest, most abundant, and least expensive food supply in the world.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Veach follows:]

Prepared Statement of Randy Veach, Cotton, Rice, Corn, Wheat, and Soybean Producer, Manila, AR

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, my name is Randy Veach, a row-crop producer from rural Mississippi County, which is the largest row crop county in the nation. I raise cotton, rice, corn, wheat and soybeans. I farm with my son Brandon, who is the fourth generation to farm the ground cleared by my grandfather and father. This will be my 42nd crop.

I am serving my fourth term as President of Arkansas Farm Bureau, the state's largest agriculture advocacy organization with more than 220,000 member families.

I commend this Committee, with your leadership Mr. Chairman, for putting forth a bill to the Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction. Agriculture was the only Committee that put forward a proposal, and you should be congratulated for that.

We must as a nation get our house in order, and agriculture is ready to do its part in that effort. We feel across-the-board cuts are the fairest way to reduce our country's spending. We cannot balance the Federal budget on the backs of agriculture, and the cuts should not be so severe that eliminate the safety net that helps ensure adequate supplies of food and fiber. I feel, in fact, that agriculture is critical to our national security.

I believe the next farm bill should be crafted to benefit all

sectors of the agriculture community and all regions of the country. I also believe it should be passed this year. Farmers and ranchers risk it all to feed, clothe and shelter our nation and the world. A one-size-fits-all approach will not work for all regions and all commodities. Farm programs should take into consideration commodity and regional differences.

Agriculture has a national impact of agriculture is \$170 billion. It is our state's largest industry with a direct impact of more than a \$9.4 billion and an indirect impact of more than \$16 billion. We exports more than \$2 billion in agricultural products each year. Arkansas ranks number one in rice, number two in catfish, broilers, and number three in cotton.

Agriculture must have workable risk management programs. These programs consist of a combination of Commodity Programs and Crop Insurance. Historically, commodity programs provided price risk protection and crop insurance covered yield risk. In Arkansas our yield risk is mitigated by irrigation (we are 80 percent irrigated for row crops). However, this greatly increases our input costs. That is the reason crop insurance participation is lower in the Mid-South than other parts of the country.

Arkansas agriculture needs a traditional program that provides price protection.

The current marketing loan program, with increased loan rates that reflect current prices and a countercyclical program with higher target prices calculated on planted acres and current historic yields, would provide price protection.

Maintaining the marketing loan program benefits all the crops, as recent high prices of cotton, cotton placed under the CCC loan have been steadily declining since the 2007 crop. The Mid-South accounts for approximately 50 percent of cotton placed under loan. This is a perfect time to increase loan rates, as commodity prices are up, as well as our inputs (fuel, fertilizer, crop protectants, etc.) Prices are cyclical, and these high prices are not sustainable.

November Average Cash Price Reported by USDA

Crop	1981	1991	2001	2011
Cotton (lb)	63.00	62.40	30.77	90.40
Rice (cwt)	9.83	7.58	4.23	14.40
Soybeans (bu)	6.00	5.42	4.18	11.50

As you will see, 2001 was a very difficult year for agriculture. The "three-legged stool" approach saved agriculture during the low prices. The marketing loan and countercyclical program protected our farmers against those times of low prices.

Cotton

Total value of cotton production in Arkansas totals \$694.5 million. Cotton is more than lint. Cottonseed production was 5.3 million tons and equates to \$118 million. It is used primarily by the livestock industry with 50 percent used by dairy farmers.

U.S. farmers planted 14.4 million acres of cotton in 2011. This was an increase of 34 percent from the previous year. Mid-South plantings were just less than 2.5 million acres, a 29 percent increase.

2011 was a year of difficult and diverse weather; flooding, followed by drought, and back to flooding.

Abandonment rates were up 34 percent. The highest since USDA began reporting both planted and harvested area in 1909. The Southwest growers were unable to harvest 60 percent of their cotton area. As you know, Mr. Chairman, Oklahoma registered the largest abandonment, 83 percent of planted area being a total loss. I contend Arkansas growers, through irrigation, didn't have the losses that our western neighbors experienced.

This is another example of why a one-size-fits-all program will not work effectively for all regions.

While flooding delayed planting in the Mid-South, our losses were in yield, not abandonment. Arkansas cotton production experienced a 107 lb. decrease compared to 2010. The average price in 2010 for cotton was \$.89 lb. If you calculate the price of cotton with 107 lb. decrease it equates to an average \$95.23 reduction per acre.

Due to the spring floods, for the first time, we witnessed an issue that needs to be addressed. Flood insurance is not offered to cover grain stored "on-farm." With more grain stored on farm, we need the Federal flood insurance to cover on-farm grain stored in bins.

Another issue that was witnessed for the first time was grain in the loan was unable to be delivered due to the flood. The Secretary could not extend the provisions of the loan due to Section 1203(b). I suggest amending Subtitle B, "Marketing Assistance Loans and Loan Deficiency Payments" Section 1203(b) Extension Prohibited, by either

eliminating Section 1203(b) Extension Prohibited or establishing a criteria for the Secretary to have the ability to extend the marketing assistance loans due to Federal Declared disasters.

I understand public perception regarding direct payments, but I feel that I must caution you on the overnight elimination of this program and what it would do to the economy of several agricultural states. For example, the elimination of DP would have a \$243 million impact on Arkansas' economy, and equates to an average of \$40 per acre in eastern Arkansas. In Iowa, the reduction is \$473 million, Illinois \$418 million and Texas \$390 million. This will be an immediate reduction of the state's agricultural economy. This change will affect operating loans, rental agreements and also reduce land values. An immediate elimination of direct payments will cause Mid-South farmers higher risk due to larger operation loans with less collateral. That will increase pressures on agriculture lenders. I would caution the Committee about a complete and overnight overhaul of farm programs. That could affect markets, crop rotation, our state's agriculture economy, and have unintended consequences in the marketplace.

Federal crop insurance will not replace the lost protection now provided by direct payments. Higher marketing loan rates and higher target rates will help provide the price protection needed by farmers.

Dairy

For the record, I want to express our support for Congressman Peterson's bill to eliminate the dairy price support program and the Milk Income Loss Contract program and to use the funding associated with those programs to offer a voluntary gross margin insurance program for dairy farmers.

Arkansas Farm Bureau lead an effort 3 years ago to create a successful state program that assisted our dairy industry.

The main reason for this was to assist our dairy farmers during the toughest of times, as the national program did not work and needed an overhaul. Congressman Peterson's bill is the overhaul the dairy industry needs to survive.

Research

We oppose any cuts to research funding. We recognize the key role that agricultural research plays in making and keeping the farm sector competitive, profitable and responsive to the country's changing food, feed and fiber needs.

Our increase in production is directly related to successful research. Research is an invaluable investment for agriculture and the nation. Land-grant universities provide unbiased research that farmers and ranchers rely on to make informed decisions.

We support the funding for our land-grant universities through the research title, particularly the formula funding like the Hatch and Smith-Lever that enables our universities to deliver programs so important to our states.

These Federal investments are not only matched 7:1 with state dollars, but finance programs on key issues at the state level, like herbicide resistance, water quality, 4-H, as well as profitable--and sustainable--production practices.

A pressing research issue is pigweed control in cotton and the issue of glyphosate resistance.

Conservation

Funding for conservation practices and programs to help farmers and land owners comply with Federal environmental regulations should be maintained. I contend EQIP is the most beneficial conservation program, as it helps all sectors of agriculture and should remain at current funding levels.

We support the current conservation programs, given the fiscal considerations and increasing worldwide demand for food; we strongly support the "working lands" programs over the land retirement programs. The five conservation programs without baseline beyond FY 2012 should not be extended by cutting funding elsewhere.

Payment Limitations/AGI

We oppose any changes to the current payment limitations or means test. To be viable, we must recognize realistic economies of scale to justify the large capital investment associated with farming.

Credit

We support the enhancement of the Emergency Loan Program to assist farmers and ranchers during declared disasters. We feel that the eligibility requirements should be modified for the program to meet the needs of our farmers. We propose eliminating the 30 percent loss and the two lender credit denial requirements.

Specialty Crop

We support our specialty crop farmers and encourage assistance on research, food safety, marketing and promotions.

Livestock

We favor maintaining a livestock title.

In conclusion, our country needs a diverse agriculture industry. Rural America counts on agriculture; in fact it is the primary economic

engine for our rural communities. At the same time, agriculture counts on those rural communities. Anything that weakens our rural communities has a negative impact on agriculture. So, in that way, we have a co-dependent relationship.

The farm bill should be crafted to support all sectors of agriculture. I appreciate the hard work of this Committee to help ensure farmers and ranchers have a reliable safety net that works during times of decreased prices and difficult weather, and one that fits their region and their commodity. With that in place, U.S. farmers will continue to provide the safest, most abundant, and most affordable food supply in the world.

Thank you. And God bless America.

The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Veach.

Mr. Combs, you may proceed when you are ready.

STATEMENT OF PAUL T. COMBS, RICE, SOYBEAN, COTTON, CORN, AND WHEAT PRODUCER; PRESIDENT, SUNRISE LAND COMPANY, KENNETT, MO

Mr. Combs. Thank you. Chairman Lucas, Congressman Crawford, Congressman Neugebauer, and Congressman Stutzman; thank you for holding this hearing today and for allowing me the opportunity to testify.

My name is Paul T. Combs and our farms produce corn, cotton, wheat, soybeans, and rice in the Missouri Bootheel. My family is also in the farm equipment business with dealerships in southeast Missouri and northeast Arkansas.

I want to start out by thanking Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Peterson for the work they did in putting together a farm bill last fall that would have served farmers and the taxpayers well. I appreciated your efforts because you put together a farm bill that worked for all farmers rather than picking winners and losers. I also appreciated your work because it was clear that you were not driven by personal ideology of what farm bills should look like in concept, but instead, what actually works with producers on the ground. And finally, I thought it was extremely important that you did not forget the lesson of 1998 where there was inadequate protection in the event of low prices. That mistake was costly to farmers and the taxpayers alike, and I hope it is not repeated.

It happens that what I so appreciate about the work you did last fall is my main message about what the 2012 Farm Bill should look like. The 2012 Farm Bill should not pick winners and losers by forcing all farmers into a policy that works for some, but not for others. Forcing everyone into a revenue program would have that effect.

The 2012 Farm Bill should offer producers a menu of options that meaningfully address the risks they face on their farm. Price-based and revenue-based options and a STAX option for cotton producers makes good sense.

The next farm bill should also meet what should be the lowest common denominator in any farm bill, and that is to be there when the bottom falls out on prices. Some people in Washington, and even some of my fellow producers, forget the basic economic lesson that what goes up usually comes down. Every one of us will regret being a part of a farm bill that would ignore this basic economic lesson. Revenue protection without some minimum price protection such as you included in the 2011 package would repeat the grave mistakes of the past if we see prolonged periods of low prices. This sort of policy would fail farmers.

The 2012 Farm Bill should offer producers a little certainty at a time when there is little certainty. That means enacting a 2012 Farm Bill in 2012 rather than kicking the can down the road a year and leaving us to wonder what policy will be beyond next year. It also means letting the ink dry on substantial payment limitations and means testing reforms included in the 2008 bill. If Washington is serious about global competitiveness, it would do best to lose this sort of social engineering that holds us back from competing against heavily subsidized and protected foreign competition.

Last, Ranking Member Peterson has, time and time again, suggested that crop insurance may one day be all we producers have left. I hope that is not the case because crop insurance does not work as well for farmers in this area, as it does for Iowa corn and bean farmers where the typical coverage is 80 or 85 percent of revenue.

In the case of rice, roughly 1/2 of our production is in CAT and the other 1/2 is at the 60 percent yield coverage. We as an industry have been trying to change this for 4 years but

have so far been unsuccessful. Our industry will keep working on it, but if the two policies that we have pending are improved, we are still a long way off from being where producers in the Midwest are relative to crop insurance.

So the bottom line is we are entering the farm bill debate at a huge disadvantage as one of the main things that works for us is the direct payment and that is the one thing that is going to be eliminated under this bill.

Fortunately, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Peterson, you know this well and you have worked with our industry to ensure that rice farmers are not left out in the cold in this farm bill process. And for that, we all thank you very much. We are grateful to both of you.

Thanks once again for taking the time to be here today and for the opportunity to hear perspectives of producers like myself.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Combs follows:]

Prepared Statement of Paul T. Combs, Rice, Soybean, Cotton, Corn, and Wheat Producer; President, Sunrise Land Company, Kennett, MO
Introduction

Chairman Lucas, Ranking Member Peterson, and Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing concerning farm policy and the 2012 Farm Bill. I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony on farm policy from the perspective of a producer who comes from an area that produces many different crops and where we have a number of cropping options.

My name is Paul T. Combs. I raise rice, soybeans, cotton, corn, and wheat in Dunklin and Pemiscot counties in the Missouri Bootheel. In addition to our farming operation, my family and I also own and operate farm equipment dealerships in both Missouri and Arkansas.

I recently completed two terms on the board of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. I also serve on several boards and committees for farm organizations, including the USA Rice Federation.

Effects of Strong Farm Policy

As a producer who is involved in both production agriculture and as an agribusiness supplier, I come to the table with a somewhat unique perspective.

As a producer, I need long-term certainty in Federal farm policy that will allow me to make business planning decisions on my farm. For this reason, I believe it is imperative that Congress pass a 5 year farm bill this year, not a short-term extension that leaves me in limbo as to what policy will be in place. We are trying to grow our farm by purchasing land when opportunities arise. We are trying to improve our marketing options by expanding on-farm storage capacity so we can better market our crops. These types of decisions require not only long-term policy, but policy that will allow us to tailor our risk management options to the needs of our farm.

As an agribusiness owner, I see firsthand the impact that uncertainty and inadequate farm policy can have on producers when it comes to their decisions about investing in new equipment for their farms. Right now prices are decent for most of the crops in our area, but we all know how cyclical commodity prices are, and every grower needs a policy that will provide some downside price protection if (and likely when) we see a steep decline in commodity prices. Without this type of certainty, farmers, like any businessperson, will take steps to minimize their exposure to risk, resulting in a pullback in investments for their farm. This pullback starts first with their suppliers of inputs (equipment, grain storage facilities, fertilizer) and then begins to impact the majority of businesses in rural America. We've seen this cycle play out over and over and I hope we will not repeat the mistakes of the past by putting in place a farm policy that assumes good prices are here to stay, and then we find out it is ill-equipped to deal with the decline in prices that is sure to come.

Effective farm policy gives producers the confidence we need to continue to invest in our farms and the confidence that lenders need to extend the financing to producers to make these investments. During my time on the Federal Reserve board, I saw the importance of not hindering this access to credit.

2008 Farm Bill Review

The traditional mix of farm policies that were continued in the 2008 Farm Bill including the nonrecourse marketing loan, loan deficiency payment, and countercyclical payments have not triggered for most crops due to the current market price levels. Yet the cost of inputs have increased in step with the rise in commodity prices so the current levels of price protection afford very limited protection to producers. However, I would note the importance of maintaining the existing marketing loan which plays an important role in marketing of our cotton and rice in particular.

As such, whatever its imperfections, the Direct Payment alone has

assisted producers in meeting the ongoing and serious price and production risks of farming today.

Because the Direct Payment has been singled out for elimination in the next farm bill, I believe that we must strengthen the remaining policies in the 2012 Farm Bill to ensure that producers have the ability to adequately manage their risks and access needed credit.

Crop Insurance

The current suite of risk management products offered through Federal Crop Insurance has provided limited value to producers in the Mid-South.

What farmers need from Federal crop insurance are products that will help protect against increased production and input costs, particularly for energy and energy-related inputs. Because crop insurance does not cover the margin risk that some producers face, we must work to develop a new generation of crop insurance products that will provide more meaningful risk management tools that will aid in protecting against sharp, upward spikes in input costs. I am aware that the rice industry is currently pursuing development of such a product, but it is important to stress that even if a new product is approved this year, it takes several years to conduct a pilot to ensure the policy is functioning properly. And it will be a long road to explain the new product to producers and encourage evaluation of the policy, particularly in areas like mine where we have not historically seen high levels of participation in crop insurance. The bottom line is that even if crop insurance is made effective one day for rice and other crops currently under-served, insurance cannot replace the need for farm policy under the farm bill for any crop.

Conservation

Conservation policies play an important role in production agriculture by providing financial cost-share and technical assistance to producers in their continual efforts to conserve water, soil, air, and wildlife habitat. I support maintaining a strong conservation title in the farm bill, in particular one that emphasizes working lands conservation incentives, but not at the expense of the commodity policies.

Voluntary, incentive-based, and science-based conservation initiatives are needed, as is technical assistance. The Conservation Security Program (CSP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) are important working lands initiatives that assist producers with protection of the environment and conservation of natural resources and should be reauthorized.

Rice producers in my area were some of the early participants in the original CSP and we saw real benefits from this and the other conservation initiatives.

I support the efforts undertaken last fall by the Agriculture Committees to streamline and consolidate the conservation title as part of the Select Committee process, and I urge you to continue with this approach in developing the conservation title in the 2012 Farm Bill.

I would like to note that rice farming is one of the few commercial enterprises that actually promotes wildlife habitat and improves biological diversity.

Since the very nature of rice production requires that fields be flooded for many months of the year, evidence shows unequivocally that it plays a vital role in supporting common environmental goals, such as protecting freshwater supplies and providing critical habitat for hundreds of migratory bird species.

Without rice farming, wetland habitats in the United States would be vastly reduced. A loss of this magnitude would have a disastrous effect on waterfowl and a host of other wetland-dependent species.

The clear and positive benefits that commercial rice production has for migratory birds and other wildlife species contribute not only to a more interesting and diverse landscape, but also provide economic benefits that support local economies and create jobs.

By providing an environment favorable to wildlife advancement, rice production clearly generates positive benefits to the economy and society.

Farm Bill 2012

Farm policy should be designed to support a strong and dynamic U.S. agriculture sector.

As noted earlier, the 1996 Farm Bill's Direct Payments have provided critical help to farmers in the Mid-South--offering capital farmers could tailor to their unique needs.

However, given the pressure to move away from this policy to more countercyclical policies, I support the following priorities:

The triggering mechanism for assistance should be updated to provide tailored and reliable help should commodity prices decline below today's production costs, and should include a floor or reference price to protect in multi-year low price

scenarios.

Second, as payments would only be made in loss situations, payment limits and means tests for producers should be eliminated.

Third, Federal crop insurance should be improved to provide more effective risk management for rice in all production regions, beginning with the policy development process.

Price Protection Is Imperative

Given the price volatility for the crops I produce, and the fact that most crops in my area are irrigated, most of the risk that I face is on prices, not necessarily production. This is very true for my rice, which is fully irrigated, but most of my other crops are irrigated as well. To address this primary risk, I believe providing effective levels of price support for all crops should be the central focus of this farm bill, and honestly this is what farm policy has historically been focused on and that should continue.

I hear some contend that a revenue-based policy with no reference or floor price is the right approach to take in this farm bill and is all that is needed when coupled with crop insurance. It seems to me that this approach is flawed in several ways. First, this assumes that crop insurance works equally well for all crops and regions, which I can assure you is not the case today. Second, this assumes that we won't face another 1998 through 2002 scenario where we have good commodity prices that quickly fell to catastrophic levels due to global factors. Third, this assumes that if commodity prices fall then input costs will decline in sync and proportional to the decline in prices. I have to say that if history is any guide, then I believe all three of these assumptions will prove wrong. And by not planning now for this type of scenario, we are setting ourselves up for another situation where farm policy will not be equipped to respond to this price decline. The result will be a significant economic downturn in rural America, followed by calls for Congress to provide additional economic assistance in a time of large Federal budget deficits and debt.

In addition, what happens if the price of only one or two commodities decline sharply? I can't imagine that input costs are going to decline in this scenario, so producers of these crops are forced to deal with a severely depressed price environment where our options are to either stop producing all together, or shift into the other crops with higher prices. This could have severe implications to the infrastructure for the crops with depressed prices and reduced production. We have seen this occur in some areas with both rice and cotton infrastructure and I believe we can ill-afford a farm policy that would not provide us with effective downside price protection to forestall any further contraction of these industries.

For example, based on the farm bill process last fall, I believe the reference price for rice should be increased to \$13.98/cwt (\$6.30/bu). This level would more closely reflect the significant increases in production costs for rice. And this reference price should be a component of both the price-loss policy and the revenue-loss policy to ensure downside price protection.

Producer Choice

In addition, there should be true options for producers that recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach to farm policy does not work effectively for all crops or even the same crop in different production regions.

Here in the Mid-South where I farm, a price-based loss policy is viewed as being most effective in meeting the risk management needs, again largely due to our consistent production as a result of large investments in irrigation infrastructure and being blessed with adequate water resources. Specifically, this policy should include a price protection level that is more relevant to current cost of production; paid on planted acres or percentage of planted acres; paid on more current yields; and take into account the lack of effective crop insurance policies for many crops in my area.

Using rice as an example, this is a crop grown in a fairly limited geographic area, yet there are distinctions between growing regions that make a difference in what policy will work best for rice. In the California production region, although the existing revenue-based policy still does not provide effective risk management, efforts to analyze modifications which will increase its effectiveness continue. Since rice yields are highly correlated between the farm, county, crop reporting district, and state levels, we believe the revenue plan should be administered for rice at either the county or crop reporting district level to reflect this situation rather than lowering guarantee levels to use farm level yields. By setting loss triggers that reflect local marketing conditions, delivering support sooner, and strengthening revenue guarantees that account for higher production costs as well as the absence of effective crop insurance, California

rice producers are hopeful that an effective revenue option can be developed.

While I have focused on the need for a choice for rice producers in different regions, this also applies for producers of most other grains. I support having policy options available for corn, soybeans, and wheat, which I produce, and believe that both a price-based policy and a revenue-based policy should be offered as options for these crops.

I indicated earlier that I am also a cotton producer. I want to encourage the Committee to include the cotton industry's area wide, risk management proposal in the new farm bill. It has been designed to fit the new budget constraints, while providing a reasonable and sustainable safety net for cotton producers. While it is certainly not perfect and is not comparable to our current policy, it represents the substantial reform necessary to provide a basis to resolve the longstanding Brazil WTO case. It does fit the cotton industry's situation far better than the revenue plans designed by Midwestern interests for grains and oilseeds. And it preserves the marketing assistance loan, with modifications, that is so important to our entire industry. It is imperative that the Brazil case be resolved by the end of 2012 to eliminate any possibility that Brazil will impose the prohibitively high tariffs authorized by the WTO. Retaliation in the form of high tariffs will disrupt U.S. exports and adversely impact U.S. businesses across the board.

Bankability--SURE is not tailored to the multiple business risks producers face. ACRE, while offering revenue-based protection, is complicated by requiring two loss triggers; providing payments nearly 2 years after a loss; and provides no minimum price protection--it is not bankable. For example, on farms I enrolled in the ACRE program I just received this month the ACRE payments for the 2010 crop. This is not a policy I can take to a lender and show that it will provide a meaningful and timely safety net. The marketing loan and target prices are plain and bankable--unfortunately the trigger prices are no longer relevant to current costs and prices.

Defendable--It makes sense to provide assistance when factors beyond the producer's control create losses for producers. I believe that tailored farm policies are more defendable. For this reason, updating bases and yields or applying farm policies to planted acres/current production and their triggering based on prices or revenue, depending on the option a producer chooses. However, policy choices should not result in severe regional distortions in commodity policy budget baselines from which reauthorized commodity policies must be developed. Whatever is done should allow for proportional reductions to the baseline among commodities.

Building a safety net to withstand multi-year low prices--Whether in a revenue-based plan, or a price-based plan, reference prices should protect producer income in a relevant way in the event of a series of low price years. Ideally, this minimum could move upward over time should production costs also increase, this being of particular concern in the current regulatory environment.

No distortion of planting decisions--Any commodity specific farm policy that is tied to planted acres must be designed with care so as to not create scenarios that incentivize farmers to plant for a farm policy. As I have followed the current farm bill debate since last fall, I am amazed at some of the assertions about a price-based policy distorting planting decisions and resulting in large acreage shifts. The price levels that I understand were developed last year and how they were factored based on acreage and yield percentages would have meant they were well below our costs of production for all crops. This idea that maintaining a price-based policy is somehow distorting, and that a revenue-based policy that is based off historically high prices is non-distorting is misleading.

Payment Limitations and Means Testing

I strongly oppose any further reduction in the payment limit and adjusted gross income (AGI) levels provided under the current farm bill. Payment limits have the negative effect of penalizing viable commercial size, family farms the most when crop prices are the lowest and support is the most critical. To be a viable farm, we must use economies of scale to justify the large capital investment costs associated with farming today. It is essential that producers maintain eligibility for all production to the non-recourse loan. Arbitrarily limiting payments results in farm sizes too small to be economically viable, particularly for rice, cotton, and grain farms across the Sunbelt. The current payment limit and AGI provisions have created significant paperwork burdens and costs to producers to comply and remain in compliance. As oppressive as these limits are, at a minimum Congress should not make any further reductions or limits that further penalize commercially viable farms.

2011 Efforts for Submission to the Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction

I believe that the package prepared for recommendation for the

Budget Control Act of 2011 is a good framework on which to build the 2012 Farm Bill. The choice of risk management tools that producers can tailor to the risks on their own farms, providing under each of those options more meaningful price protection that is actually relevant to today's production costs and prices. I appreciate the hard work of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees and their staff to address the budget constraints you are under, while working in a bicameral and bipartisan fashion to achieve workable solutions for the farm bill.

Conclusion

Again, thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to offer my testimony this morning. I look forward to working with you and your staff as we move forward in this process. I would be happy to respond to any questions you might have.

The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Combs.
Mr. Flowers, proceed when you are ready.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD BOWEN FLOWERS, Jr., COTTON, CORN, SOYBEAN,
WHEAT, AND RICE PRODUCER,
CLARKSDALE, MS

Mr. Flowers. First, I would like to offer my thanks to Chairman Frank Lucas and Members of the Committee for the chance to provide input on the importance of an effective and flexible farm policy. My thanks are also extended to Congressman Rick Crawford for hosting today's hearing. My name is Bowen Flowers and I operate a diversified family farm partnership in and around Clarksdale, Mississippi, which is about 150 miles south of Jonesboro. My crop mix includes cotton, corn, soybean, wheat, and rice.

Mr. Chairman, I understand the daunting task facing this Committee with the development of new farm legislation. Budget pressures will mean addressing a broad array of interests and priorities with less money. In my opinion, agriculture is willing to take a proportionate contribution to deficit reduction, but efforts to impose inequitable reductions on agriculture should be strongly opposed.

With respect to production agriculture, I encourage this Committee to take into consideration the diversity of production practices, cost structures and risk profiles. A one-size-fits-all farm program cannot address this diversity, and I hope that the eventual farm bill will offer a range of programs structured to address the needs of the different commodities and production regions.

I also urge the Committee to complete the farm bill this year, in advance of the expiration of the current legislation. We need some certainty regarding farm programs as we look at the long-term investments necessary to keep our farming operations economically viable.

Although my operation has a diversified mix of crops, I consider cotton my primary crop. As you are well aware, cotton faces the additional challenge of resolving an ongoing trade dispute with Brazil. In that dispute, a WTO panel found fault with cotton's marketing loan and target price. In preparing for the expedited farm bill debate, cotton producers had to make some difficult policy decisions. To that end, the National Cotton Council has proposed dramatic changes to upland cotton programs by eliminating the target price and introducing a formula that will allow the marketing loan to adjust lower in times of low prices. In place of the target price as well as the ACRE program and the direct payment, the cotton industry is proposing a revenue-based insurance product that will address a level of risks for which current insurance products do not offer affordable options.

I strongly support the industry's proposal known as STAX, and hope the Committee looks favorably on this option when crafting the next farm bill. I commend the National Cotton Council for developing this area-wide revenue-loss crop insurance program. It should be noted since this is a crop insurance program, producers would be required to pay part of the cost of such coverage. Covering up to 95 percent of revenue is especially important in my region, based on high cost of inputs and thin margins. Several years of five percent or more revenue losses would be economically devastating to my operation.

While I am a diversified producer, it is important to note that cotton production is the most single significant economic driver in my area. It means jobs on the farm, in gins, warehouses and through the production and processing cotton cycle. The spin-off impact on rural communities in the Delta,

for input suppliers, equipment dealers, and others is also significant. Even a moderately sized city such as Clarksdale is very dependent on agriculture. Therefore, a viable cotton farm policy is especially critical to our rural area.

Mr. Chairman, I would also like to voice my concerns about the efforts to further tighten payment limits or impose arbitrary means tests. Effective farm policy must maximize participation without regard to size or farm income.

In conclusion, I will touch briefly on two final points.

First, crop insurance is a critical tool for effective risk management. I personally purchase crop insurance coverage on my crops. With the STAX product, the cotton industry is proposing to broaden the menu of insurance choices. I encourage all existing products be maintained as well.

Second, conservation programs were strengthened in the 2008 Farm Bill, and I hope these programs will continue to provide workable options for Mid-South farming operations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer these comments and I will be happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Flowers follows:]

Prepared Statement of Richard Bowen Flowers, Jr., Cotton, Corn, Soybean, Wheat, and Rice Producer, Clarksdale, MS

First, I would like to offer my thanks to Chairman Frank Lucas, Ranking Member Collin Peterson, and Members of the Committee for the chance to provide input on the importance of an effective and flexible farm policy. My thanks are also extended to Congressman Rick Crawford for hosting today's hearing. My name is Bowen Flowers and I operate a diversified family farm partnership in and around Clarksdale, Mississippi, which is about 150 miles south of Jonesboro. My crop mix includes cotton, corn, soybeans, wheat and rice.

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I strongly support the industry's proposal, known as STAX, and hope the Committee looks favorably on this option when crafting the next farm bill. I commend the National Cotton Council for developing this area-wide revenue-loss crop insurance program. It should be noted that since this is a crop insurance program, producers would be required to pay part of the cost of such coverage. Covering up to 95% of revenue is especially important in my region based on high cost of inputs and thin margins. Several years of 5-10% revenue losses would be economically devastating to my operation.

While I am a diversified producer, it is important to note that cotton production is the most significant economic driver in my area. It means jobs on the farm, in gins, warehouses and on through the production and processing cotton cycle. The spin-off impact on rural communities in the Delta and other regions for input suppliers, equipment dealers and others is also significant. Even a moderately-sized city such as Clarksdale is very dependent upon agriculture. Therefore a viable cotton farm policy is especially critical to our rural economy.

As a cotton farmer, I understand that my ability to produce a crop will be dependent on strong demand for my product. The U.S. cotton industry sells both to domestic textile mills as well as international mills, and both markets are extremely important. Fortunately, the 2008 Farm Bill included programs that benefit both markets.

In the case of U.S. textile mills, the 2008 farm law introduced the Economic Adjustment Assistance Program. The program is a success story that is revitalizing the U.S. textile manufacturing sector and adding jobs to the U.S. economy. The program provides a payment to U.S. textile manufacturers for all upland cotton consumed. The payment rate from August 1, 2008 through July 31, 2012, is 4 cents per pound of cotton used, and will be adjusted to 3 cents per pound beginning on August 1, 2012. I encourage the continuation of this important program in the new farm law.

In addition, the continuation of adequately funded export promotion programs, including the Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development (FMD) Program, are important in an export-dependent agricultural economy. Individual farmers and exporters do not have the necessary resources to operate effective promotion programs which maintain and expand markets--but the public-private partnerships facilitated by the MAP and FMD programs, using a cost-share approach, have proven highly effective and have the added advantage of being WTO-compliant.

Mr. Chairman, I would also like to voice my concerns about efforts to further tighten payment limits or impose arbitrary means tests. Effective farm policy must maximize participation without regard to size or farm income. Artificially limiting benefits is a disincentive to economic efficiency and undermines the ability to compete with heavily subsidized foreign agricultural products. I appreciate the pressures from some in Congress for even more restrictive limits, but I would like to remind the Committee that the 2008 Farm Bill contained significant changes with respect to payment limitations and payment eligibility. In fact, the 2008 farm law included the most comprehensive and far-reaching reform to payment limitations in 20 years. The limitations were made more restrictive, and the adjusted gross income test was substantially tightened. As part of the 2012 Farm Bill, I urge this Committee to not impose any further restrictions on payment eligibility including lower limits or income means tests.

In conclusion, I will touch briefly on two final points. First, crop insurance is a critical tool for effective risk management. I personally purchase crop insurance coverage on my crops. With the STAX product, the cotton industry is proposing to broaden the menu of insurance choices. I encourage all existing products be maintained as well. Second, conservation programs were strengthened in the 2008 Farm Bill, and I hope those programs will continue to provide workable options for Mid-South farming operations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer these comments. I will be happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.

The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Flowers.

Mr. Burch, whenever you are ready to proceed.

STATEMENT OF TIM BURCH, COTTON AND PEANUT PRODUCER, BURCH FARMS, NEWTON, GA

Mr. Burch. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is Tim Burch. I am a native of Baker County, Georgia which is located in the southwest part of the state. My father, brother, and I run a diversified farming operation. We have approximately 500 acres of peanuts, 1,500 acres of cotton and 150 head of cattle. I have been farming for 37 years and live on the farm of my grandparents. I serve on the Georgia Peanut Commission and I am an alternate to the National Cotton Council. I also am active in Georgia Farm Bureau.

It is critical that Congress pass a 5 year farm bill. Farmers, agribusiness, and financial institutions need as much certainty as possible in an industry that has a very large number of variables impacting profits and losses.

When I began farming, the peanut industry was driven by a Federal supply management peanut policy. In 2002, peanut growers met with the House Agriculture Committee leadership and asked the Committee to move our program policy from the peanut quota program to a marketing loan type program. This marketing loan program is what we have today. It has been very successful for our industry. We support the current program as included in the 2008 Farm Bill but we recognize that there is significant effort to eliminate direct payments. All of our policy analyses assume that direct payments are eliminated. For the last several farm bills, peanut producers have relied on the University of Georgia's National Center for Peanut

Competitiveness for farm policy economic analyses. The Center has 22 U.S. representative peanut farms established and maintained by the Center. As farm organizations, Members of the House and Senate, as well as public institutions offered farm policy concepts for the 2012 Farm Bill, the Center would analyze each proposal, including multiple scenarios through the 22 U.S. representative farms dispersed throughout the peanut belt.

What was evident with each of these alternative or revenue type programs is that they did not work on the 22 representative farms. I recognize that some organizations believe that a one-size-fits-all revenue program will work for the U.S. agricultural economy. I do not agree. Our cost structure and equipment needs alone are significantly different than that of the Midwest and our peanut producers require very specialized equipment. Why do these revenue proposals not work for peanuts?

First of all, there is no consideration for irrigated versus non-irrigated production practices. There are significant yield differences for peanuts--at 1,100-1,400 pounds, based on Risk Management Agency's data and the U.S. peanut representative farms. The Center's 2011 preliminary data indicates that the yield differences could reach 3,000 pounds and higher per acre in Georgia. National Agricultural Statistics Service county yields do not separate out the differences between irrigated and non-irrigated peanuts.

Second, there is no revenue insurance program for peanuts.

Third, peanuts do not have any source of predicted harvest price.

Peanuts do not and will not have a futures market like other row crops.

The Rotterdam price series with appropriate conversion formula for peanuts is the best source. Our own U.S. Government used the Rotterdam price series during the GATT trade negotiations and the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service reports that price series.

Utilizing NASS-CRD and NASS county yields will not work for peanuts. None of the six Georgia representative farms analyzed triggered on either the CRD criteria or the county level using existing NASS yields. No CRD district that has one of the Center's representative peanut farms outside of the Southeast would trigger a payment. Peanuts have a greater variability of yield within a county and CRD than any other crop excluding cotton.

An Olympic average does not work to protect a farm from a period of depressed prices or weather related depressed yields.

Given the 2011 peanut season, none of the non-irrigated producers who had between no yield and 1,000 pounds would have been helped by any of the proposed revenue proposals.

If we eliminate direct payments, what will work for the peanut producers? After conferring with the Center over the last 9 months, we believe producers need a policy choice to manage risk, including revenue protection, price protection and crop insurance. I support producers having a choice between a countercyclical type program with a trigger price of \$534 per ton and a revenue program. The Center believes this target price will serve as protection during periods of low prices. USDA estimates that the market price for peanuts is over \$1,200 per ton. I can assure you, just as any peanut producer or major buyer of peanuts would, that \$534 target price will not increase peanut production or acreage. Please also note that we have to rotate peanuts and if our rotation gets out of sync then costs escalate and yields decline.

At the same time, peanut producers need a revenue program that is a real viable choice for producers. This should include a reference price of \$534 per ton and a world market price determined by the Rotterdam price analysis.

Mr. Chairman, you and other Members of the Committee were successful in reforming payment limitation rules in the 2008 Farm Bill. Working with agricultural groups and Members of Congress not on the Agriculture Committee, I believe the reforms in the 2008 Farm Bill were equitable, and I ask that the current adjusted gross income rules and payment limitation restrictions be continued in the 2012 Farm Bill.

In closing, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Committee today. You have a difficult task as you attempt to reconcile a crisis in our Federal budget while assuring that America has an adequate and safe food supply.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Burch follows:]

Prepared Statement of Tim Burch, Cotton and Peanut Producer, Burch Farms, Newton, GA

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee. My name is Tim Burch. I am a native of Baker County, Georgia which is located in the southwest part of the state. My father, brother and I run a diversified farming organization. We have approximately 500 acres of peanuts, 1,500 acres of cotton and 150 head of cattle. I have been a farmer for 37 years and live on the farms of grandparents. We are a family farm with a long, proud history. In addition, I am involved in a cotton gin and warehouse as well as a peanut buying point, warehouse and peanut shelling facility with 87 other growers in Georgia. Our agribusiness was founded on the principle that family farmers had to join together to market their products in order to have a future.

I serve on the Georgia Peanut Commission and am an alternate to the National Cotton Council. I also am active with the Georgia Farm Bureau.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on The Future of U.S. Farm Policy: Formulation of the 2012 Farm Bill. Our family's livelihood is based on agriculture and farm policy.

It is critical that Congress pass a 5 year farm bill. Farmers, agribusinesses and financial institutions need as much certainty as possible in an industry that has a very large number of variables impacting profits and losses. A 5 year farm bill allows all segments of agriculture the opportunity to achieve the economic impact that all of us desire.

When I began farming, the peanut industry was driven by a Federal supply-management peanut policy. In 2002, peanut growers met with the House Agriculture Committee leadership and asked the Committee to move our program policy from the peanut quota program to a marketing loan type program. This marketing loan program is what we have today. It has been very successful for our industry. We support the current program as included in the 2008 Farm Bill but we recognize that there is a significant effort to eliminate direct payments. All of our policy analyses assume that direct payments are eliminated. For the last several farm bills, peanut producers have relied on the University of Georgia's National Center for Peanut Competitiveness (Center) for farm policy economic analyses. The Center has 22 U.S. Representative Peanut Farms established and maintained by the Center. As farm organizations, Members of the House and Senate as well as public institutions offered farm policy concepts for the 2012 Farm Bill, the Center would analyze each proposal, including multiple scenarios through the 22 U.S. Representative Farms dispersed throughout the peanut belt.

What was evident with each of these alternative or revenue type programs is that they did not work on the 22 Representative Farms. I recognize that some organizations believe that a one size fits all revenue program will work for the U.S. agricultural economy. I do not agree. Our cost structure and equipment needs alone are significantly different than the Midwest with our peanut producers requiring very specialized equipment. Why don't these revenue proposals work for peanuts?

There is No Consideration for irrigated versus non-irrigated production practices. There are significant yield differences for peanuts--at least 1,100-1,400 lbs.--based on Risk Management Agency (RMA) data and the U.S. Peanut Representative Farms. The Center's 2011 preliminary data indicate that the yield differences could reach 3,000 lbs. and higher per acre in Georgia. National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS) county yields do not separate out the differences between irrigated and non-irrigated peanuts.

There is NO revenue insurance program for peanuts--all proposals use revenue insurance as the core part of their program where a producer is covered at the 65-85% level. Peanuts had a GRIP yield insurance program but no peanut farmers used it so RMA has discontinued the program. This implies county yield based programs do not work for peanuts.

Peanuts do not have any source for a predicted harvest price.

Peanuts DO NOT and WILL NOT HAVE A FUTURES MARKET like other row crops. Multiple land-grant university studies and efforts by the U.S. Department of Agriculture have all concluded that a futures market is not an option for peanuts.

The Rotterdam price series with appropriate conversion formula for peanuts is the best source. Our own U.S. Government used the Rotterdam price series during the GATT trade negotiations and the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service reports that price series.

Utilizing NASS-CRD and NASS-County yields WILL NOT work for peanuts. None of the six Georgia Representative Farms analyzed trigger on either the CRD criteria or the county level using existing NASS yields. No CRD district that has one of the Center's Representative Peanut Farms outside the Southeast would trigger a payment. Peanuts have a greater variability of yields within a county and CRD than other row crops excluding cotton.

An Olympic average does not protect a farm from a period of depressed prices or weather related depressed yields.

Given the 2011 peanut season, none of the non-irrigated producers who had between no yields to 1,000 lbs would have been helped by any of the proposed revenue proposals.

If we eliminate direct payments, what will work for peanut producers? After conferring with the Center over the last 9 months, we believe producers need a policy choice to manage risk--Revenue Protection, Price Protection and Crop Insurance. I support producers having a choice between a countercyclical type program with a target price of \$534 per ton and a revenue program. The Center believes this target price will serve as protection during periods of low prices. USDA estimates that the market price for peanuts is over \$1,200 per ton. I can assure you, just as any peanut producer or major buyer of peanuts would, that a \$534 per ton target price WILL NOT increase peanut production or acreage. Please also note that we have to rotate peanuts and if our rotation gets out of sync then costs escalate and yields decline.

At the same time, peanut producers need a revenue program that is a real, substantive choice for producers. This should include a Reference Price of \$534 per ton and a world market price determined by a Rotterdam price analysis.

In addition, to Producer Choice, our growers must have access to a full range of workable and useful crop insurance products in order to compete for acreage. Working toward these goals, the nation's peanut farmers came together 2\1/2\ years ago to begin work with private industry and RMA to develop a viable insurance program for peanuts. This new program proposal is very much like the successful revenue insurance policies for cotton and corn as well as several other crops. This new peanut policy would take a farmers average production history and let the farmer insure a percentage of it according to what the farmer needs to have guaranteed. This part is not changed from the present program, but what is different is that the farmer will be assured to receive what the peanuts are actually worth if he has a shortfall in production and not some arbitrary amount set in stone months before planting time. The farmer will receive payment on what the peanuts are worth at a certain period of time during the year, so farmers know whether they can afford to plant. It is critical that we have the support of RMA and the House Agriculture Committee to get the peanut crop insurance program viably priced and implemented in 2013. I would hope that the changes Congress makes for crop insurance, in the 2012 Farm Bill, would be to improve the programs and not harm crop insurance products.

I indicated earlier that I am also a cotton producer. I want to encourage the Committee to include the cotton industry's area wide, risk management program in the new farm bill. It has been designed to fit the new budget constraints, while providing a reasonable and sustainable safety net for cotton producers. While it is certainly not perfect and is not comparable to our current program, it represents the substantial reform necessary to provide a basis to resolve the long-standing Brazil WTO case. It does fit the cotton industry's situation far better than the revenue plans designed by Midwestern interests for grains and oilseeds, and it preserves the marketing assistance loan, with modifications, that is so important to our entire industry. It is imperative that the Brazil case be resolved by the end of 2012 to eliminate any possibility that Brazil will impose the prohibitively high tariffs authorized by the WTO. Retaliation in the form of high tariffs will disrupt U.S. exports and adversely impact U.S. businesses across the board.

Mr. Chairman, you and other Members of the Committee were successful in reforming payment limitation rules in the 2008 Farm Bill. Working with agricultural groups and Members of Congress not on the Agriculture Committee, I believe the reforms in the 2008 Farm Bill were equitable. I ask that the current adjusted gross income rules and payment limitation restrictions be continued in the 2012 Farm bill.

In closing, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Committee today. You have difficult task before you as you attempt to reconcile a crisis in our Federal budget while assuring that Americans have an adequate, safe food supply.

Thank you.

The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Burch.

And for any of you in the audience who ever thought you wanted to be a witness, now comes the fun part--you get to answer questions from the Committee. With that, I recognize myself for 5 minutes.

Mr. Brantley, some have suggested that using a reference price established in law would result in producers planting for the government program. Those same folks suggest that a 5 year Olympic average price in a revenue program has no impact on current planting decisions.

Can you elaborate on the factors you consider when you make your cropping decisions and the role that reference prices would play in those decisions?

Mr. Brantley. The role of the reference price as I see it, or the view that I see that I looked at last fall, determining whether we would grow more acres than is sustainable here in Arkansas, is just not feasible. The \$13.98 target price, that figure that was given to us last fall, in all reality, you have to look at it on a whole-farm basis, 85 percent times your countercyclical yield, which in Arkansas is about 70 percent of your normal yield, is well below the cost of production. So those that say the target price reference price in that area, the \$13.98, would increase production are just, in my opinion, dead wrong. Our true cost of production is in the \$14.00 range. If you average that across all the U.S., the Olympic average, if commodity prices were high for a long time and then prices fell, yes, that would work. But what if it is the other way around.

I can see the Olympic averages creating more acres than the target price.

The Chairman. So the goose should always be careful when talking about the gander, huh?

Mr. Veach, I understand that Arkansas Farm Bureau recently made a decision to dissent from the American Farm Bureau policy. Can you talk about some of the reasons that the Arkansas Farm Bureau determined it could not support the SSRP proposal? And to your knowledge, along with that, is the Arkansas Farm Bureau the only state that disagreed with this approach?

Mr. Veach. Yes. The SSRP program is a deep loss crop insurance program that triggers on regions. And that just really does not work, especially for some of our commodities here in Arkansas. We wanted the opportunity to speak to this Committee and to our Congressional delegation on what we feel like is a more workable plan for Arkansas agriculture, taking into consideration those regional and commodity differences. And to do that, it was for us to dissent from the American Farm Bureau policy that is supporting the deep loss regional trigger approach. And so we feel like that we need a more diverse type of farm bill that will take into consideration these regional and commodity differences.

Now we did not take that lightly. We deliberated on that for a good long while, but we felt like it was extremely important, for us to represent the producers in our state, that we would dissent from that program.

The Chairman. Fair enough.

Mr. Combs, regarding the package the Committee developed last fall, I remember reading an article where it was suggested that a price option would cause rice acres in this country to explode by 5 or 10 million acres. Do you agree with that assessment? And why?

Mr. Combs. I think that article was put out by people talking from their position and that was a different commodity and, no, it is not going to result in an explosion. Like Mr. Brantley pointed out, the plan that you had put forward, the Committee put forward, only offered that price protection on 85 percent of your planted acres and then on historic yields. So, farming is a lot--and the machinery business--if it was easy, everybody would be doing it. And that is not the case with this program.

The Chairman. Fair enough.

Mr. Burch, based on the analysis that the peanut industry has done through the University of Georgia, could you discuss if a revenue type shallow loss program would work for peanuts?

Mr. Burch. No, sir, it would not, on the fact that it does not distinguish between irrigated and non-irrigated. There is such a variability. On my own farm this past year, I had as good an irrigated yield as I have ever had at an additional

cost. There was a 3,200 pound yield difference between my irrigated and dryland crop this year. So not taking that into consideration, it would not work.

The Chairman. Fair enough.

Mr. Flowers, my last question, my time is about to expire. Did I understand you basically to say that commodity title resources should follow production? That is a pretty amazing concept for some of the folks that we serve with back East to understand.

Mr. Flowers. We had a lot of hard decisions to make, since cotton was kind of pointed out in the Brazil case, the target prices were pointed out in the case and the marketing loans. That is the reason we kind of came up with the STAX program to take care of that situation.

The Chairman. I just could not help but note what I understood your comment to be, resources should follow the production. There are a lot of folks we serve with who want to use the farm bill to do everything imaginable in the way of directing resources. We will talk about that again in a moment.

My time has expired. I now turn to the gentleman from Texas, who actually has fewer trees than I have in the 3rd District of Oklahoma. Mr. Neugebauer for 5 minutes.

Mr. Neugebauer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for having this hearing. I appreciate Mr. Crawford encouraging the Committee to come to Arkansas, he is a great Member and I am enjoying serving with him. We appreciate you all sending him to help us do some great work for our country.

You know, one of the things since I have been in Congress, this is my fifth term, I have been working a lot on crop insurance. In fact, in the 2008 Farm Bill, we had a concept that we had approved and passed out of our Committee. Unfortunately, the Speaker of the House, Ms. Pelosi, decided to take that out of the farm bill. But I have reintroduced what is called the Crop Risk Options Plan Act of 2011 and some of you may or may not have seen that. And basically it talks about taking a GRP or a GRIP policy and putting it on top of a multi-peril to give producers some flexibility. Because one of things I know, as Mr. Brantley pointed out, farming today is big business. And in order to be competitive in the global economy, unfortunately, it is more and more difficult for smaller producers to do that. And so as you get into these large operations, very diverse, it takes more and more capital and more and more loans to do that. In order to make those businesses viable, we need a very strong and effective crop insurance, risk management for our producers.

One of the things that I think is an important part of that is having the flexibility. For example, talking about the regional trigger, the trigger for my crop bill is a county trigger, which we think is more reflective of the conditions, and not the region. Depending on how you draw geographical regions, the ability to have different conditions within those regions is very probable. Generally in a county, I think it is easier to be more reflective.

One of the things I wanted to talk about, because we keep hearing the price, some kind of a price protection, yield protection, within these risk management policies. One of the things we are going to be faced with is we are going to be given a certain amount of money, our Committee is, to craft a farm policy. So what I want to do is leave as much flexibility in there. So one of the things I wanted to ask you to comment on is when we look at being able to add some additional features to this, obviously that increases the scoring. So should we make, for example, some of these things options instead of a mandatory part of the policy. So if a producer wanted to buy price protection, for example, he could choose-- he or she could choose to do that or not. And that would impact the cost of the policy, and the same way with some additional yield protection. Should that be something that we are thinking about or considering as we begin to look at the crop insurance? And what is your feeling about, for example, having a county trigger?

Mr. Brantley.

Mr. Brantley. I believe an option is exactly what we are asking for, I think all of us would agree here at this panel. An option of a price over revenue is exactly what we need.

Help me here, Mr. Combs, if you do not mind.

Mr. Combs. Well, we would like the price protection and then also our industry is trying to develop a formula that would also offer input cost protection. And it would be--and the more options you can have on it, in theory, the lower it

should score. I mean if the producer wanted that level of coverage, they should be able to purchase it. But we have to have the help of RMA to get these policies approved. You know, we have been beating our head against the wall for 4 years and we had two concepts and we still have not gotten them approved.

Mr. Neugebauer. That is one of my frustrations as well. The thing about what we set out to do with our bill was to take existing products so we did not have to go out in the field and test those. So it is basically just giving them the authority to take existing products basically and combine those.

So, when you start talking about those options, obviously it increases the cost of those, but when I look around this table we see a lot of folks that have different commodities. And so what we want to be able to do is allow you to determine, for those particular commodities, what is the best option for you. And not necessarily tie you into one policy to try to manage the total farm operation.

Mr. Combs. I understand that, but existing crop insurance products have not been successful in the rice industry. That is the point that we would drive home.

Mr. Neugebauer. Those are the changes that I think we are going to need to look at. So thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas, Mr. Crawford, for 5 minutes.

Mr. Crawford. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Veach, I want to direct my first question to you. As a result of budget cutting and political environment and the Brazilian WTO case against cotton, the cotton industry came up with the STAX plan to serve as a primary risk management tool for cotton growers. Can you give some detail as to whether this type of coverage would work for Arkansas cotton producers?

Mr. Veach. I think that the STAX program, for a lot of the cotton industry, cotton producing areas, would work very well. And it would work in Arkansas as well, but I think with the amount of irrigation that we have and how we mitigate that risk in irrigation, that we need a little more protection in price. I think that one of the best ways of doing that is if we have these options. It has to be a viable option, and I think that producers could decide if that program is the one that works best for them, or if more of a price-based type program would work better for them. I think those options have to be very viable options. It cannot be just an option. It has to be one that really provides a safety net. If we have options to provide a safety net, then we have the opportunity to pick which one of those works best for that particular commodity on that particular type farmer's ground.

I think that we are not looking at great diversity in programs. I do not think we can have a whole large assortment of programs to pick from, but I think that we can--if the Committee can come to some--where that we can have very viable options, a couple, two or three, that producers can use the choice to do that.

But I think the STAX program works very well for a lot of producers, but some maybe would rather have more price protection.

Mr. Crawford. Each of the witnesses gave some comments about crop insurance and particularly as it applied to rice and some specific issues there. I want to switch gears just a little bit and talk about conservation.

And I will kind of direct this to each of you, but I will start with Mr. Brantley. This Committee is going to need to take a serious look at lowering the acreage cap with the CRP and also deciding the future purpose of the program. Given the increased demand for grain, high crop prices, and increasing land values, what do you see as the future role of CRP and what changes would you like to see in the program?

Mr. Brantley. I do not participate in the CRP program, so to suggest changes, I do not know that I can answer that. But conservation programs are very important to me and my family on our farm, EQIP being the number one program. Water, we talk about irrigation here on this panel, water storage is critical for a rice crop here in Arkansas, so the EQIP program, I think for me, should be first and foremost when we talk about conservation programs. I do realize CRP is a big part of conservation, plays a very important role. But I could not make any recommendations today.

Mr. Crawford. Mr. Combs.

Mr. Combs. I share Dow's thoughts. I mean our farms participate in EQIP and the Conservation Security Program and the Migratory Bird Habitat Program and WRP. So we are in four

conservation programs and I think they are very important for both our farms for conservation and then for other stakeholders in the country, because they provide benefits for water fowl and wildlife and other things.

But CRP is not a big deal in the Delta and so I feel more confident to comment on these programs than I would be on the CRP.

Mr. Crawford. Okay. And the reason I used CRP as an example, just strictly as an example, it has just been around for what, 25 years now, and so in general terms---

Mr. Combs. It is a big deal to a lot of people, it is just not on--we are pretty tied to the NRCS office in our county, but we are just not as much on CRP.

Mr. Crawford. Mr. Flowers, any input on that?

Mr. Flowers. CRP has been a good product in the Mississippi Delta. There has been a lot of land going into CRP and WRP. Like everybody else, we are 80 percent irrigated and a lot of the land that is not irrigated has been put in CRP for wildlife. Something I would like to see, we are starting to have some water issues and we want to conserve our water for future generations and one thing I would like to see is maybe developing a CRP program where we could impound water and use that for irrigation.

Mr. Crawford. Okay.

Mr. Flowers. EQIP has been very important to our area also.

Mr. Crawford. Excellent. Mr. Burch, last word on that.

Mr. Burch. I just do not see CRP as being critically important in a time that we are needing to maximize our production to feed this world.

Mr. Crawford. Excellent. Thank you. I yield back.

The Chairman. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now turns to the gentleman from Indiana for his 5 minutes.

Mr. Stutzman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank each of you for being here today.

Being a fourth generation farmer from Indiana, it is great to sit here and listen to you all and your stories and your experiences. And I believe that we in agriculture have a great opportunity to lead in our nation's capital. And I appreciate the Chairman's leadership on leading in the negotiations last year with the Committee, the super committee, that was designed to fix our country's problems, which I believe the Chairman did the right thing in putting a bill together and crafting a bill and being prepared. That is what farmers do, we are always prepared for the worst and we are always trying to be prepared for the best as well. But we focus on the worst probably more than anything.

I have just a couple of questions, and really for any of you, because you are--two of you are from Arkansas and the others from other parts of the South here. You know, being a farmer, I remember going into the bank with my father and I always hated sitting on the farmer's side of the desk. I always wanted to be on the banker's side. Well, today, I would rather be on the farmer's side. The bankers, they have kind of taken it on the chin lately.

Has credit availability changed for you all and how have your experiences been with access to credit and the experiences that you have. And what you may see with your neighbors around your communities and the challenges, what experiences are people facing right now in your communities.

Maybe we can start with Mr. Burch and just go right down the line.

Mr. Burch. Well, in my area it is pretty much like I am sure it is all over the United States, the people that do not need to borrow have ready access to money. And the people that need it are having trouble getting it. So it just depends on your collateral situation. It is very tight for people that have marginal operations.

Mr. Stutzman. Mr. Flowers.

Mr. Flowers. I am a director on a bank and it is really important for us, we would like to see some kind of crop insurance that the farmers in our area can afford and take advantage of. I know the banks want to make sure that they have pretty good collateral and stuff. Our problem is we do not have the deep losses, but the losses between the deep losses and what it actually costs to produce is where we have our problems. So that is kind of what we look at. So that would be very helpful if we had some kind of coverage that would take care of that.

Mr. Combs. Typically in agriculture, credit is available

when times are good. And that is what we are seeing now. And so, credit will tighten up when the prices decline and that is why the farm bill is so important, because when credit does tighten up, we need protections that can be offered in farm policy in order to ensure that that credit still flows. I am not saying that there is no lack of credit right now, because there could be in individual cases, but everybody is wanting to lend money to farmers today, compared to the late 1990s.

Mr. Veach. I think that if direct payments are done away with, it is going to affect the lending quite a bit, especially loans to rice producers and cotton producers in the fact that you are going to lose what is a guarantee up front, but you are going to have a certain amount of dollars coming in on that operation. And those producers will have to be able to show through their cash flow and the collateral that they can pay that loan back without that direct payment. And that computes out to \$100 an acre or so for rice and \$30 and \$40 an acre on cotton. And if you compute that out in rice in the State of Arkansas on actual planted acres, you are looking at probably at least close to \$50 an acre now that you are going to have to show to your lender that you can get by without that. And that is going to be a big factor in getting loans.

Mr. Brantley. I would echo Mr. Veach's comments. The loss of direct payments will make it very difficult. One thing to note is how important our community banks are versus our larger banks. The community banks understand us, they know us well, they know farming, they know the risks. It is vitally important that we keep those community banks in our neighborhoods and keep them around versus large corporate banks who just strictly look at the number and not necessarily a name or understand the risk.

Mr. Stutzman. Mr. Brantley, real quick, we have the warning light here, but could you give us a quick example. Rice seems to be the one that you are most concerned about, across the table here, about protection. Is that right? Cotton, Mr. Flowers mentioned cotton as well. I mean, do you think there is room for us focusing on those two particular crops? Do the other crops need the direct payment program behind them?

Mr. Brantley. Rice is the most important on our farm. Yes, I think direct payment would fit my farm best for all crops, but rice being the most important because it is the most politically traded commodity in the world, compared to the other commodities.

Mr. Stutzman. Right. Thank you.

The Chairman. The chair will yield to the gentleman from Indiana 30 seconds, and would the gentleman yield to the Chairman?

Mr. Stutzman. Yes, sir.

The Chairman. Mr. Flowers, you said you are on the board of directors of a bank. My bankers tell me in Oklahoma, and I assume it is the same across the country, that they are in a more rigorous period of examination by the bank examiners. Long gone are the days when it was just a simple process. It is now a really horrendous process and that in every farmer's loan file, not only do you have copies of participation in the farm bill, but you also have to have all your crop insurance records and all those things to prove that you are covering all your bases. Is that your observation?

Mr. Flowers. That is definitely, we are going through more and more rigorous examinations in the bank. First thing we look at is what the direct payments are, what crops have you already sold and what kind of insurance you have.

The Chairman. So it does not necessarily matter how great your record is and how much confidence your banker has in you. If he or she does not have all of those records in your file to show the examiner, then the examiner comes down on the loan officer, which causes complications. So for a variety of reasons, these tools are absolutely necessities. Correct, sir?

Mr. Flowers. That is correct. The days of just knowing who you are dealing with are over. You have to have everything documented and every "i" dotted and crossed every "t". You are correct.

The Chairman. Absolutely. Any additional questions for this panel?

[No response.]

The Chairman. Seeing no additional questions from the Committee for the panel, I would like to thank you for your insights and your expertise. And you are dismissed, gentlemen.

As they are stepping away from the table and our next group of witnesses in panel two are preparing to come forward, I

would like to introduce them. Mr. David C. Hundley, rice, corn, soybean producer, Jonesboro, Arkansas; Mr. Mike Freeze, aquaculture producer, Keo Fish Farm, Keo, Arkansas; Mr. Dan Stewart, cow/calf producer, Mountain View, Arkansas; Mr. John E. Owen, rice, soybean, corn, and cotton producer, John and Annie Owen Farms, Rayville, Louisiana; and Mr. Walter Corcoran, Jr., cotton, corn, peanut, soybean, grain sorghum, and cow/calf producer, Eufaula, Alabama.

As they are setting up, once again, I thank the previous panel for those very thoughtful statements and very insightful answers to our questions. That is what this is all about.

Swing that microphone around towards you there, Mr. Hundley, and whenever you are ready, you may begin.

STATEMENT OF DAVID C. HUNDLEY, RICE, CORN, AND SOYBEAN PRODUCER, JONESBORO, AR

Mr. Hundley, Chairman Lucas, Congressman Crawford, and other Members of the Committee and guests, my name is David Hundley. I am a producer from Bay, Arkansas and I am also the general manager for JHM, Inc., a third generation diversified agricultural business that includes a cotton gin and a grain elevator located in the First District. Thank you for holding this hearing at my alma mater, Arkansas State University and in the First Congressional District of the great State of Arkansas, and for this opportunity to testify before you regarding farm policy issues.

According to a recent study released by the University of Arkansas, agriculture is the single largest industry in the State of Arkansas, and the First Congressional District is by far the most diverse in the state with several different diverse crops being produced here, all contributing over \$17 billion of value added to the Arkansas economy. That is 17 cents of every dollar that is generated in Arkansas of value added. The contribution of the agriculture sector as a percentage of GDP in Arkansas is greater than in any other contiguous state, as well as the average for the Southeast region of the United States. The Arkansas agriculture sector, as a percentage of GDP is 10.73 percent and Arkansas is in the top ten states in the production of ten agricultural commodities.

An economically viable agriculture is essential for the United States of America to remain the greatest country in the world. The farm bill should be written for the good of the country and not for the purpose of garnering votes for re-election. In my opinion, we need smart policy that meets the following criteria:

The 2012 Farm Bill should recognize the contribution of the American farmer and work to preserve the farmer and farm family by providing tools to manage risk, access credit, and ensure the ability to create and maintain our farming population.

Farm programs should not favor the production of one commodity over another. Farm programs should work for all commodities and protect farmers against the unique risks associated with each commodity and various methods of production, such as irrigated production.

Farm programs should be fair and available to all producers regardless of size, commodity grown, income, or business structure. Means testing is not a fair or effective policy. Setting such tests would be detrimental to the family farms of Arkansas.

The farm bill should help farmers deal with the myriad regulations that they currently face from multiple government agencies. Many existing regulations put American producers at a disadvantage to their foreign counterparts. On environmental issues, farmers are land stewards that should be recognized for their efforts to preserve the land for production and conservation. Incentives to preserve the land work.

Congress should recognize that farmers receive very little funding when compared to the nutrition components of the farm bill. Any increase in funding for nutrition programs should not be offset by cutting programs dedicated to American farmers. We cannot bite the hand that feeds us.

Risk management tools should be uniquely tailored for each crop. A one-size-fits-all program will not work, especially in this region of the country. We need risk management tools for protection against all risk including yield loss, price declines, and input cost spikes. Without such a safety net, lenders will not be willing to risk capital and credit will not be available for farmers to operate.

Today, I am respectfully asking that we lay aside partisan politics and engage the great base of knowledge and skills possessed by the American farmer to craft a sound farm policy that is based on real economic principles. While most farmers are supportive of the current farm bill commodity programs, it is clear that Congress wants to transition to a new safety net risk management approach and away from direct payments, regardless of the underlying commodity price. We need a new safety net risk management approach. I believe the safety net programs, including the direct payment program should be tied to actual production costs of in-year production. Safety nets should offer less in the good years and more in the lean years. It needs to be a program that promotes efficiency to growing progressive farmers, while not ignoring small family farms who garner that same efficiency by engaging the entire family and utilizing off-farm income. We are all American farmers and neither should be admonished or admired through class warfare more or less than the next.

In summary, the producers and citizens of Arkansas require a strong agriculture industry to provide for their existence and to contribute to the strength of American agriculture. I believe that the entire country would be better served if the base of knowledge and skills of the American farmer were engaged in a serious discussion about the best ways to construct a new out-of-the-box approach to really sound farm policy. Their very existence today versus the opportunities that Mother Nature provides on an annual basis is testament to our ability to constantly adapt on a minute's notice. The greatest threat today remains the monopolization of all the industries that we as farmers rely on to purchase our daily inputs. These monopolies have the ability to reduce their per unit cost while at the same time the general public calls for American agriculture to remain small family farmers.

Mr. Chairman, it has been my honor to be part of this discussion and I want to thank you for holding this hearing in the First Congressional District of the great State of Arkansas.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hundley follows:]

Prepared Statement of David C. Hundley, Rice, Corn, and Soybean Producer, Jonesboro, AR

Chairman Lucas, Congressman Crawford, other Members of the Committee and guests, my name is David Hundley. I am a producer from Bay, Arkansas and I am also the General Manager for JHM, Inc. a third generation diversified agricultural business that includes a cotton gin and grain elevator located in the First District. Thank you for hosting this hearing in the First Congressional District of the Great State of Arkansas, and for the opportunity to testify before you regarding farm policy issues at my Alma Mater--Arkansas State University.

According to a recent study released by the University of Arkansas, Agriculture is the single largest industry in the State of Arkansas and the First Congressional District is by far the most diverse in the state with cotton, grain, poultry, catfish, baitfish, livestock, sweet potatoes and forest products all contributing over \$17 billion of value added to the Arkansas economy. That is 17% of every dollar generated in Arkansas of value added. Arkansas agriculture provides 275,435 jobs which is one in six of all jobs. The contribution of agriculture sector as a percentage of GDP in Arkansas is greater than in any contiguous state as well as the average for the Southeast region of the United States. The Arkansas Agriculture sector as a percentage of GDP is 10.37%. Arkansas is in the top ten states in the production of ten agricultural commodities.

Arkansas agriculture is responsible for generating jobs in all 20 industries in the North American Industry Classification System used for economic analysis. Employment in the top five NAICS industries total 197,599 jobs which accounts for 72% of all jobs in Arkansas being generated by agriculture. The value being generated in these top five industries total \$12,274 Million. I believe it is obvious that Agriculture is vital to the Great State of Arkansas as well as the United States of America and it is imperative that the integrity this industry is preserved with sound Farm Policy as there has never been a great nation without a strong and sound agriculture sector.

An economically viable agriculture is essential for the United States of America to remain as the greatest country in the world. In my opinion, we need smart policy that meets the following criteria.

1. The 2012 Farm Bill should recognize the contribution of the American farmer and work to preserve the farmer and farm family by providing tools to manage risk, access credit, and ensure the ability to create and maintain our farming population.

2. Farm programs should not favor the production of one commodity over another. Farm programs should work for all commodities and protect farmers against the unique risks associated with each commodity and various methods of production, such as irrigated production.
3. Farm programs should be fair and available to all producers regardless of size, commodity grown, income, or business structure. Means testing is not fair or effective policy. Setting such tests would be detrimental to the family farms in Arkansas.
4. The farm bill should help farmers deal with the myriad of regulations that they currently face from multiple government agencies. Many existing regulation put American producers at a disadvantage to their foreign counterparts. On environmental issues, farmers are land stewards and should be recognized for their efforts to preserve the land for production and conservation. Incentives to preserve land work.
5. Congress should recognize that farmers receive very little funding when compared to the Nutrition components of the farm bill. Any increase in funding for nutrition programs should not be offset by cutting programs dedicated to American farmers. We cannot bite the hand that feeds us.
6. Risk management tools should be uniquely tailored for each crop. A one size fits all program will not work, especially in this region of the country. We need risk management tools for protection against all risks including yield loss, price declines, revenue declines, and input cost spikes. Without such a safety net, lenders will not be willing to risk capital and credit will not be available for farmers to operate.

America today is made up of largely urban society and these urban born, urban raised citizens take their daily food & fiber for granted. Most of these same urbanites take the American Agricultural system for granted and spend countless dollars fighting to over regulate and destroy the same system that sustains their daily existence. While the average American spends less of their disposable income than many other developed countries on an excellent and ample supply of food they do not understand that a 60 pound bushel of wheat that is worth \$6 to an American Farmer makes approximately 100 loaves of bread which sell for an average of \$3 per loaf. The American Media's misconception that a \$1 bushel rise in the price of wheat causes bread to increase in price by 50% cannot be part of the policy process. Can this person be involved or effective in creating a sustainable viable agriculture policy? The average cost of the newest John Deere cotton harvester is over \$600,000. A farmer that needs to add an additional harvester should not have to navigate a myriad of USDA regulations to justify its existence.

Today I am respectfully asking that we lay aside partisan politics and engage the great base of knowledge and skills possessed by the American Farmer to craft a sound Farm Policy that is based on real economic principles. While most farmers are supportive of the current farm bill commodity programs, it's clear that Congress wants to transition to a new safety net risk management approach and away from direct payments regardless of the underlying commodity price. I believe safety net programs, including the direct payment program should be tied to actual production costs and actual in year production. Safety nets should offer less in the good years and not limited to an arbitrary limit in the lean years. It needs to be a program that promotes efficiency to growing progressive producers while not ignoring small family farms who garner that same efficiency by engaging the entire family and utilizing off farm income. We are all American Farmers and neither should be admonished or admired through class warfare more or less than the next.

In summary, the producers and citizens of Arkansas require a strong agricultural industry to provide for their existence and to contribute to the strength of American Agriculture. I believe that the entire country would be better served if the base of knowledge and skills of the American Farmer were engaged in a serious discussion about the best ways to construct a new out of the box approach to really sound Farm Policy. Their very existence today versus the opportunities that Mother Nature provides on an annual basis is testament to our ability to constantly adapt on a minutes' notice. The greatest threat today remains the monopolization of all the industries that we as farmers rely on to purchase our daily inputs. These monopolies have the ability to reduce their per unit cost while at the same time the general public calls for American Agriculture to remain small family farmers.

Mr. Chairman, It has been my honor to be a part of this discussion

and I want to thank you for holding this hearing in the First Congressional District of the Great State of Arkansas.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Freeze, begin when you are ready, after you swing that microphone around--yes.

STATEMENT OF THOMAS MICHAEL ``MIKE'' FREEZE,
AQUACULTURE PRODUCER; CO-OWNER, KEO FISH FARM, KEO, AR

Mr. Freeze. My name is Mike Freeze and I have been an Arkansas fish farmer since 1983. I am Co-Owner of Keo Fish Farms which has 1,300 acres of ponds in which we produce hybrid striped bass and sterile triploid grass carp for live sales nationally and internationally.

I would like to thank Chairman Lucas and my own Congressman Rick Crawford and the remaining Members of the House Committee on Agriculture for allowing me to address you about national issues that impact aquaculture in the United States.

For aquaculture facilities that ship live product nationally, our number one regulatory issue is the Lacey Act. Written in 1900 and amended numerous times, including in the 2008 Farm Bill, the Lacey Act prohibits the international and interstate trafficking of illegally obtained wildlife and fish or parts thereof. When the Lacey Act was written, aquaculture was practically non-existent, yet today our domesticated fish are regulated as if they were taken from the wild. Of particular concern is that that Lacey Act elevates the violation of even misdemeanor state regulations to Federal felonies simply because over \$350 of domesticated product has entered interstate commerce. Penalties for a Lacey Act violation begin at \$100,000 and 4 months incarceration in a Federal penitentiary. This scenario is analogous to a \$50 speeding ticket being elevated to a \$100,000 speeding ticket simply because you are driving on an interstate highway.

I am enclosing with my written testimony a copy of a report by the National Agricultural Law Center entitled, Aquaculture and the Lacey Act, in which author Elizabeth Rumley states, ``The Act should be amended to exempt domestically produced aquatic species."''

Next, I would like to talk to you about aquaculture's reliance upon the services provided by USDA/APHIS Wildlife Services and Veterinary Services. Fish-eating birds are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Wildlife Services' verification as to the intensity and degree of bird depredation at a particular aquaculture facility is a requirement for U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to issue a Bird Depredation Permit to that facility. It would be impossible for the private sector to address these depredation issues without Wildlife Services' direct involvement.

Veterinary Services animal health inspection and certification allow America's aquaculturists to market their live aquatic animals nationally and internationally. Once again, it is impossible for the private sector to address such health certification issues that are codified in the national and international law as requiring a Veterinary Services' health certificate.

I understand in this time of budgetary constraints that tough decisions have to be made. But our industry should only have to take their proportional share of any funding decreases. In the case of Wildlife Services, the entire aquaculture line item of \$1,063,000 in the Fiscal Year 2013 President's budget was deleted at the request of APHIS without any stakeholder input.

As you probably know, imported seafood contributes significantly to our national trade deficit and reducing USDA support to our industry will only cause this \$10 billion imbalance to increase.

Catfish farming and processing is a significant part of the American aquaculture industry. The last several years have been challenging for catfish producers and processors. Higher input costs are impacting the industry and reducing its ability to meet demand. According to USDA statistics, catfish processing and overall fish inventory are down 35 and 25 percent respectively from the previous year. While there are multiple insurance products and Federal programs to protect crops and livestock from market fluctuations, the catfish industry lacks a tool to reduce the risk of volatility caused by rising input costs or depressed market values.

I would urge the Committee to consider instructing the USDA

Risk Management Agency to include catfish and other food fish within the Livestock Gross Margin and Livestock Risk Protection insurance programs. These insurance programs allow farmers and ranchers to purchase insurance policies to protect against price and input cost volatility.

The 2008 Farm Bill included instructions for the USDA to establish a voluntary fee-based inspection and grading program for catfish. The USDA catfish inspection rule remains a top priority for the catfish industry and the American public. The Committee's past and continued support on this issue is greatly appreciated.

USDA has undertaken a thorough process for the implementation of this new responsibility. The comment period closed on June 24, 2011, and of the 280 comments posted, 84 percent urged FSIS to include all imported and domesticated catfish in the new regulations currently under consideration. A broad definition of catfish is imperative to effective inspection of catfish and catfish like products. Should USDA make the unwise decision of including the more narrow definition of catfish, more than 95 percent of all catfish like imports will remain uninspected upon entry into the U.S. market. Gentlemen, this is not a trade issue, this is a food safety issue. And the American public deserves the implementation of this rule at the earliest possible date, using the broad definition, which includes the three families typically consumed as food.

Additionally, the aquaculture industry has serious concerns about FDA's proposed rule that would significantly change regulations regarding unapproved drugs found in food products. The FDA released this proposed regulation on January 25, that would provide a simplified approval process for persons requesting the import of food items containing residues of animal drugs that are unapproved in the U.S. I believe that U.S. consumers should have confidence that food products are safe. There is great concern that this proposed rule signals a move by the Administration towards allowing drugs to be used by foreign producers that are prohibited in the United States. And I would strongly urge the Committee to oppose this move by the Administration.

Finally, one issue that impacts all farmers is the closing of county FSA offices across the United States according to criteria established in the 2008 Farm Bill. While the closing of most of these offices is justified, occasionally a county office with a moderate to heavy workload meets the closing criteria while an adjacent office with a lighter workload does not. Recent incentives for FSA employees to retire just prior to the determination of which FSA county offices met the closing criteria has exacerbated this issue. Therefore, I would respectfully ask the Committee to consider enacting emergency legislation that would allow each state FSA committee to exchange the closing of one county office for another county office, as long as the total number of offices closed within that state remains the same.

Thank you, gentlemen.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Freeze follows:]

Prepared Statement of Thomas Michael "Mike" Freeze, Aquaculture Producer; Co-Owner, Keo Fish Farm, Keo, AR

My name is Mike Freeze and I have been an Arkansas fish farmer, since 1983. I am Co-Owner of Keo Fish Farm along with my business partner, Mrs. Martha Melkovitz. Our farm has 1,300 acres of ponds in which we produce hybrid striped bass and sterile triploid grass carp for live sales nationally and internationally.

I would like to thank Chairman Lucas, my own Congressman Rick Crawford and the remaining Members of the House Committee on Agriculture for allowing me to address you about national issues that impact aquaculture in the United States.

For aquaculture facilities that ship live product nationally, our number one regulatory issue is the Lacey Act. Written in 1900 and amended numerous times, including in the 2008 Farm Bill, the Lacey Act prohibits the international and interstate trafficking of illegally obtained wildlife and fish or parts thereof. When the Lacey Act was written, aquaculture was practically non-existent, yet today our domesticated fish are regulated as if they were taken from the wild. Of particular concern, is that the Lacey Act elevates the violation of even misdemeanor state regulations to Federal felonies simply because over \$350 of domesticated product has entered interstate commerce. Penalties for a Lacey Act felony violation begin at \$100,000 and 4 months incarceration in a Federal penitentiary. Thus, what may be a misdemeanor state violation in both of the two states involved, is

immediately elevated to a Federal felony offense, simply because state boundaries were crossed. This scenario is analogous to a \$50 speeding ticket being elevated to a \$100,000 speeding ticket simply because you are driving on an interstate highway.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is one of the agencies that enforce the Lacey Act and their enforcement division has historically applied this act to the international and interstate movement of private aquacultural products. In part this is because the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service does not recognize the private ownership of aquacultural products. In March of 1990, a USFWS enforcement memorandum placed a low priority on using the Lacey Act against aquacultural producers except in instances where disease transmission or non-indigenous fish species were involved. Unfortunately, this memorandum has long since been forgotten. I am enclosing a copy of a report by the National Agricultural Law Center entitled "Aquaculture and the Lacey Act" in which author, Elizabeth Rumley states: "The Act should be amended to exempt domestically produced aquatic species".

Next I would like to inform you about aquaculture's reliance upon the services provided by USDA/APHIS Wildlife Services and Veterinary Services. Wildlife Service's assistance with wildlife depredation at aquaculture facilities is essential because such wildlife are often protected by Federal regulations. In the case of avian depredation, piscivorous birds are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Wildlife Services verification as to the intensity and degree of avian depredation at a particular aquaculture facility is a requirement for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to issue a Bird Depredation Permit to that facility. It will be impossible for the private sector to address these depredation issues without Wildlife Services' direct involvement.

Veterinary Services aquatic animal disease inspection and control programs are vital to protecting American aquaculture. Veterinary Services' international programs and their interactions with OIE member nations ensure that our aquacultural products are regulated in a scientific manner. Without Veterinary Services essential animal health inspections and certifications, America's aquaculturists will not be able to market their live aquatic animals nationally and internationally. The negative economic impacts from such a loss of business may actually cause many aquacultural businesses to fail. Once again, it will be impossible for the private sector to address such health certification issues that are codified into national and international law as requiring a Veterinary Services' health certificate.

Fish farmers have worked for many years with USDA and Congress to secure line item aquaculture funding for both of these agencies as only these two agencies can provide the essential services listed above. We understand that in this time of budgetary constraints that tough decisions have to be made, but our industry should only have to take their proportional share of any funding decreases. In the case of Wildlife Services, the entire aquaculture line item of \$1,063,000 in the FY 2013 President's Budget was deleted at the request of APHIS, without any stakeholder input.

As you probably know, imported seafood contributes significantly to our national trade deficit, and reducing USDA support to our industry will only cause this imbalance to increase. Currently, 84% of U.S. seafood is imported and the U.S. seafood trade deficit has doubled since 1989, reaching \$10 billion in 2010. Therefore, I am respectfully asking your assistance in restoring aquaculture's line item funding for these two agencies back to historic levels.

Catfish farming and processing is a significant part of the American aquaculture industry. The last several years have been challenging for catfish producers and processors. Similar to other sectors of the livestock industry, catfish producers are faced with extraordinarily high feed and energy prices. These higher input costs are impacting the industry and reducing its ability to meet demand. According to USDA statistics, catfish processing and overall fish inventory are down 35 and 25 percent respectively, from the previous year's reporting. While there are multiple insurance products and Federal programs to protect crops and livestock from market fluctuations, the catfish industry lacks a tool to reduce the risk of volatility caused by rising input costs or depressed market values.

I would urge the Committee to consider instructing the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) to include catfish and other food fish within both the Livestock Gross Margin (LGM) and Livestock Risk Protection (LRP) insurance programs. These insurance programs allow farmers and ranchers to purchase insurance policies to protect against price and input cost volatility. Catfish and other food fish farmers would benefit from access to these existing insurance products, allowing them to purchase a product to protect against unexpected increases in feed costs or drops in market pricing.

In addition, "The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008" included instructions for the USDA to establish a voluntary fee based

inspection and grading program for catfish. The USDA catfish inspection rule remains a top priority for the catfish industry and the American public. The Committee's past and continued support on this issue is greatly appreciated. According to Import Refusal data and also FDA Import Alerts, certain drugs and chemicals have been found in catfish imported from China, Thailand and Vietnam and have resulted in the following import refusals for Fiscal Year 2010:

Country	Refusals for Fiscal Year 2010
China	22
Thailand	4
Vietnam	30

USDA has undertaken a thorough process for the implementation of this new responsibility, including extensive public comment. The comment period closed on June 24, 2011, and of the 280 comments posted on the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) official comment site, 84 percent, or 234 postings, urged the agency to include all imported and domestic catfish in new regulations currently under consideration by FSIS. The proposed rule offers two options for the definition of catfish and seeks public comment. One option is to define "catfish" as including all species in the order Siluriformes, with the three families typically consumed as food, including Ictaluridae, Pangasius and Clariidae. A broad definition of catfish is imperative to effective inspection of catfish and catfish-like products. Should USDA make the unwise decision of including the more narrow definition of catfish, more than 95% of all catfish-like imports will remain uninspected upon entry into the U.S. market. This is not a trade issue, this is a food safety issue and the American public deserves the implementation of this rule at the earliest possible date, using the broad definition, which includes the three taxonomic families of fish that are typically consumed as food.

Additionally, the aquaculture industry has serious concerns about FDA's proposed rule that would significantly change regulations regarding unapproved drugs found in imported food. The FDA released a proposed regulation on January 25th that would provide a simplified approval process for persons requesting the import of food items containing residues of animal drugs that are unapproved in the U.S. The industry agrees with the FDA's advisory committee, the Veterinary Medicine Advisory Committee, that any drugs used to treat animals that Americans will consume should be based on food safety protections currently employed by FDA to regulate drugs used by U.S. farmers. I believe that U.S. consumers should be confident that the foods they eat are safe. There is great concern that this proposed rule signals a move by the Administration towards allowing drugs to be used by foreign producers that are prohibited in the United States. I would strongly urge the Committee to oppose this move by the Administration.

Finally, one issue that impacts all farmers is the closing of county FSA offices across the United States according to criteria established in the 2008 Farm Bill. While the closing of most of these offices is justified, occasionally a county office with a moderate to heavy work load meets the closing criteria, while an adjacent office with a lighter work load does not. Recent incentives for FSA employees to retire just prior to the determination of which FSA county offices met the closing criteria has exacerbated this issue. Therefore, I would respectfully ask that the Committee consider enacting emergency legislation that would allow each State FSA Committee to exchange the closing of one county office for another county office as long as the total number of offices closed within that state remains the same.

Attachment

National Agricultural Law Center, University of Arkansas
 An Agricultural Law Research Project
 Aquaculture and the Lacey Act
 by
 Elizabeth R. Springsteen
 March, 2010
www.NationalAgLawCenter.org
 A National AgLaw Center Research Publication
 Aquaculture and the Lacey Act
 Elizabeth R. Springsteen
 Staff Attorney
 National Agricultural Law Center

Aquaculture includes the cultivation of aquatic species for human consumption as well as for recreational or ornamental purposes. The practice has a long history, tracing back through ancient Chinese records indicating that carp was raised more than 4,000 years ago and hieroglyphics in the tombs of the Pharaohs describing tilapia farming

in ancient Egypt. However, fish culture in the U.S. has a much more limited history, beginning in the mid 1800s when Federal and state hatcheries were built to raise sportfish species to stock public and private waters. Attempts to commercialize aquaculture for food purposes did not begin until the 1950s, with channel catfish farming in the Mississippi Delta region. From those small beginnings it has become an extensive industry, bringing in yearly nationwide revenue of \$1.5 billion, according to the 2007 Census of Agriculture.

The practice of aquaculture is regulated at various levels of government, with state and local authorities generally regulating activities and issuing permits dealing with zoning, building, land and water use, waste discharge, and aquaculture production practices and species. Not surprisingly, each state's division of regulatory responsibility and authority among their agencies or offices, as well as the resulting regulations themselves, are all very different. They have each been influenced by unique state socioeconomic histories and the ecological differences between states. As a result, state aquaculture regulation is a bewildering mosaic of species regulations, with little to no consistency between geographic locations.

At the Federal level, agencies responsible for different areas of regulation include the FDA, USDA, EPA, Fish and Wildlife Service ("FWS"), Army Corps of Engineers and National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration ("NOAA").

History and Provisions of the Lacey Act

One major statute with the potential to severely affect aquaculture is the Lacey Act, 18 U.S.C. 41-48, a Federal statute passed in 1900 to protect wildlife. It was originally intended to combat hunting to supply commercial markets, the interstate shipment of unlawfully killed game, the killing of birds for the feather trade and the introduction of harmful invasive species. The Lacey Act applies to all "wild" animals, specifically including fish and amphibians, even when those animals have been "bred, hatched, or born in captivity." It is unlawful to "import, export, transport, sell, receive, acquire or purchase" any fish or wildlife "taken, possessed, transported, or sold" in violation of laws or regulations (state, Federal or foreign) that are fish or wildlife related. In 2008, plants were added to the scope of the Act.

One of the ways in which the Lacey Act can be triggered is by the violation of a Federal regulation. If this happens, the offender can be prosecuted under the Lacey Act even if no interstate shipment takes place. For example, the Endangered Species Act is a Federal statute that protects certain species. If an individual "transport[s], sell[s], receive[s], acquire[s], or purchase[s]" a creature that has been "taken, possessed, transported, or sold" in violation of that law, that person may be prosecuted under either the Endangered Species Act or the Lacey Act--even if they do not cross a state line.

However, the Lacey Act is also triggered when a state or Federal law regarding fish or wildlife is violated by a product that has been part of interstate commerce. Each state has its own protected, prohibited, restricted or approved exotic or game species lists, established by a state department of natural resources, fish and game, environmental protection or agriculture, and the creatures on the list can vary widely from one state to the next. For an example in this situation, consider Minnesota. As of this writing, in Minnesota it is illegal to transport "prohibited invasive species" on a public road, and violation subjects the offender to a \$250 civil penalty or a misdemeanor (up to 90 days and/or \$1,000). As a result, a company based in Minnesota who transports one of these species to another part of the state may only be prosecuted under the state law. A company based in another state who transports one of these species on a Minnesota road, however, may be prosecuted under the Lacey Act. This is important, especially considering the disparity between the state and Lacey Act penalties.

Lacey Act Penalties

Penalties for violating the Lacey Act are severe. If an individual "knew" or "was generally aware of" the illegal nature of the wildlife and the value of the wildlife was over \$350, he may be prosecuted and convicted under the Act's felony provisions. If that happens, the penalty is up to 5 years in prison and/or a \$250,000 fine (\$500,000 in the case of an "organization," including a business).

Misdemeanor prosecution may occur in two situations. The first is if the defendant takes/possesses/transport/sells the prohibited wildlife "without exercising due care." "Due care" means "that degree of care which a reasonably prudent person would exercise under the same or similar circumstances. As a result, it is applied differently to different categories of persons with varying degrees of knowledge and responsibility" (Senate Report 97-123). Generally, due care requires the judge to ask him or herself if the defendant, when trying to follow the law, applied as much thought, planning and prevention as would a normal, reasonable person in their situation.

It's important to remember that, as stated above, the amount of "due care" a person must show changes depending on their knowledge and responsibility level. As a result, an aquacultural producer transporting their products across state lines will probably be held to a higher standard of care than a child who is transporting his pet goldfish during a cross-country move.

The second way in which a misdemeanor may be prosecuted under the Lacey Act is if the defendant knew about the illegal nature but the value of the wildlife was less than \$350. It's important to note, however that prosecutors may aggregate, or combine, violations for charging purposes. Combining the violations can increase the value of the wildlife, and potentially elevate the offense from misdemeanor to felony status. Misdemeanor penalties are up to a year in prison and/or \$100,000 fine (\$200,000 for organizations).

Further, false labeling of wildlife transported in interstate commerce is also criminalized, regardless of intent. If the products have a market value of less than \$350, false labeling is a 1 year/\$100,000 misdemeanor, but if the value is greater than \$350, the offender may be charged with another 5 year/\$250,000 felony.

Federal Enforcement of the Lacey Act

Federal enforcement of the Lacey Act is triggered in two situations. First, it is triggered when Federal law is violated, even if no interstate commerce takes place. For example, if an individual possesses a creature that is illegal to possess under Federal law, the Lacey Act may be enforced. Second, it is triggered when a state law regarding fish or wildlife is violated by a product that has been part of interstate commerce. Each state has its own protected, prohibited, restricted or approved exotic or game species lists, established by a state department of natural resources, fish and game, environmental protection or agriculture, and the creatures on the list can vary widely from one state to the next. For an example in this situation, consider Minnesota. In Minnesota it is illegal to transport "prohibited invasive species" on a public road, and violation subjects the offender to a \$250 civil penalty or a misdemeanor (up to 90 days and/or \$1,000). As a result, a company based in Minnesota who transports one of these species to another part of the state may be prosecuted under the state law. A company based in another state who transports one of these species on a Minnesota road may be prosecuted under the Lacey Act.

How does this affect aquaculture? Imagine that a single fish (or even fish egg)--legal to possess in Wisconsin--is inadvertently loaded with a 2,000 lb. truckload of other fish that had been sold to an aquaculture producer in Minnesota. This single fish is on the Minnesota prohibited list. Once the truck crosses the state line, it is stopped by the Minnesota DNR, searched, and the prohibited fish is found. Both the Wisconsin seller and the Minnesota buyer may be prosecuted under the Lacey Act, and what would have been a maximum penalty of 90 days and/or \$1,000 from the state of Minnesota has now turned into a potential year in Federal prison and up to a \$100,000 fine. Moreover, the seller may also be charged with false labeling (for failing to include the prohibited fish in the list of the shipment's contents), adding up to another 5 years and/or \$250,000 to the sentence.

Minimizing Risk

The risks associated with the Lacey Act can, of course, be minimized by only shipping products in-state. However, this is not a reasonable or feasible option for many producers. For those producers involved in interstate shipment of aquacultural products, the only advice that may be helpful is to check, doublecheck and document every step taken to ensure that regulated species are not transported, because your freedom and livelihood might depend on convincing a judge or jury that you exercised due care in trying to prevent it. Aquaculturists can access the Injurious Species List, as authorized by the Lacey Act, by visiting <http://www.fws.gov/fisheries/ans/ANSInjurious.cfm>. The National Agricultural Library is working on a nationwide compilation of information describing species that are regulated by the states, and it is located at <http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/laws/statelaws.shtml>. This compilation is still a work in progress, so aquacultural producers should still check with the Aquaculture Coordinator in the destination state or their state for regulated species information. Visit <http://www.nasac.net/> for Coordinator contact information.

For more information on the legal aspects involved in aquaculture operations, please visit the National Agricultural Law Center's "Aquaculture" reading room, located at <http://www.nationalaglawcenter.org/readingrooms/aquaculture/>.

[GRAPHIC(S) NOT AVAILABLE IN TIFF FORMAT]

Example 1

Question: Producer A sells an unlabeled load of diploid black carp to Producer B. Diploid black carp may be possessed in Arkansas. However, it is on the Federal invasive species list, so it may not be transported across state lines.

Charges

Against A: Trafficking

Against B: Trafficking

Example 2

Question: Producer A sells a load of catfish to Producer B, but it is labeled "whitefish."

Charges

Against A: False Labeling

Against B: None

Example 3

Question: Producer A sells a load labeled "catfish" to Producer B, and a black carp is included in the shipment.

Charges

Against A: False Labeling & Trafficking

Against B: Trafficking

Example 4

Question: Producer A sells a load labeled "catfish" to Trucker in AR. A black carp is included in the shipment. Trucker drives the shipment to AL, and sells it to Producer B.

Charges

Against A: False Labeling

Against B: Trafficking

Against Trucker: Trafficking

Example 5

Question: Producer A sells a load labeled "fishfish" to Producer C. Possession of "fishfish" is legal in AR and WI, but illegal in IL, where Trucker is pulled over.

Charges: No Lacey Act violation, as long as the load was correctly labeled. Trafficking provisions do not apply to interstate shipment if the shipment is en route to a state in which the fish or wildlife or plant may be legally possessed.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Stewart, whenever you are ready.

STATEMENT OF DAN STEWART, COW/CALF PRODUCER, MOUNTAIN VIEW, AR

Mr. Stewart. I would like to thank the Committee for this opportunity to speak at the hearing today.

My name is Dan Stewart. I have been a member of the Arkansas Cattlemen Association for over 20 years, and have served on their board. I am the current President of the Stone County Cattlemen and served in that office several times. I am a long time member of the Farm Bureau, and served on the Board of Directors of the Arkansas Limousin Organization. I live up in the hills of Stone County, Arkansas on a farm my family has worked and owned for over 100 years and there has always been cattle raised on that farm for as long as I can remember.

One of my first memories is my grandpa sitting me up on the back of his big old Hereford bull. I tried that later as a teenager at a rodeo with a whole lot less success. I try my best to help my grandson to have the good memories of growing up on a farm and to know the responsibilities and work that comes with helping produce the food for our country and the world. I borrowed money and bought my first herd of cattle at the age of 16.

Compared to many others our operation is small, but when I looked at the demographics I guess I am pretty much what you could call the average cattle producer. The average age of a farmer is 57 years old and the majority by far of the cattle producers have 100 or less head of cattle in their herd. I feel small farms and ranches are the heart and soul of our communities and have a far greater value to our country than just the quantity of animals that they produce.

Most producers I know pretty much have a no-nonsense attitude when it comes to their cattle operations. If something works, they keep it. If it does not, they will try something else. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. So my suggestions to you are fairly simple.

First of all, we need easy access to the programs that the government offers. It can be a real burden to drive long distances to apply for programs or to sign papers. The road systems in our part of the state are not always straight and

smooth. It is more than just the distance as the crow flies. Not everyone has a computer or affordable access to the Internet.

One of the programs that I take very personally is the disaster assistance programs. A little over 4 years ago, one of the longest track tornadoes on record started at Atkins, Arkansas and left a continuous path of destruction nearly to the Missouri state line, well over 100 miles long. The track of this tornado went from one end of my farm to the other, destroying all my fences, barns, and damaging and nearly destroying our home. The very next morning, the CED from our Farm Service Agency was out checking on the broken farms in his area. That is why we need local offices staffed with people that know the farmers and the land in their communities. The counties that were affected by this storm were declared a disaster area and we received financial assistance to reimburse us for some of our expenses in rebuilding. Without that help, I am not sure what we would have done.

Another thing I feel is important to cattlemen is the conservation programs that help us preserve and protect our natural resources. This is even more important with the increasing concerns from the EPA and other environmental agencies.

As a cattle producer and a user of feed, I am against any subsidies for ethanol. I think these subsidies have artificially raised corn prices to the point that it has really affected the livestock industry. Ethanol should stand on its own.

I would like to see our marketing system kept as free as possible, but guard against anyone taking undue advantage of that system.

To sum this all up, basically what I am saying is when we are affected by natural disasters and forces beyond our control, be there with the tools and the help we need to get back to the point that we can continue to be productive. Give us the guidance and assistance we need to protect our soil and water, the most valuable resources that we have. Keep rules and regulations to a minimum, but when there are mandates and rules that prevent the use of our land or the ability to produce an income from it, we should be properly compensated.

Let us continue to do the job that we should be doing, and that is to produce the safest, most wholesome, and abundant food supply in the world.

Thanks again for this opportunity.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Stewart follows:]

Prepared Statement of Dan Stewart, Cow/Calf Producer, Mountain View, AR

First of all I would like to thank the Committee for this opportunity to speak at this hearing today.

My name is Dan Stewart and I've been a member of the Arkansas Cattlemen Association for over 20 years, and have served as a State Board Representative. I am the current President of the Stone County Cattlemen and served in that office several times, I'm a long time member of Farm Bureau, and served on the Board of Directors of the Arkansas Limousin Organization. I live up in the hills of Stone County Arkansas on a farm my family has worked and owned for over 100 years, and there has been cattle raised on this farm for as long as I can remember.

One of my first memories is of my grandpa sitting me upon the back is his big old Hereford bull. (I tried that later as a teenager at a rodeo with a lot less success.) I try my best to help my grandson to have good memories of growing up on a farm and to know the responsibility, and work that comes with helping produce the food for our country and the world. I borrowed money and bought my first herd of cattle at the age of 16.

Compared to many others our operation is small and I wondered why I was invited here to speak today, but when I looked at the demographics I guess I'm pretty much what you'd call the average cattle producer. The average age of a farmer is 57 years old and the majority by far of cattle producers have 100 or less head of cattle in their herd. I feel that small farms and ranches are the heart and soul of our communities and have a value to our country far greater than just the quantity of animals that they produce.

Most producers I know pretty much have a no nonsense attitude when it comes to their cattle operation. If something works they keep it, and if it doesn't they try something else, if it ain't broke don't fix it, so my suggestions to you are fairly simple.

First of all we need easy access to the programs that the government offers. It can be a real burden to drive long distances to apply for programs or sign papers. The road system in our part of the

state is not always straight and smooth. It's more than just distance. Not everyone has a computer or affordable access to the Internet.

One of the programs I take very personally is disaster assistance. A little over 4 years ago one of the longest track tornadoes on record, started at Atkins, Arkansas and left a continuous path of destruction nearly to the Missouri state line, well over 100 miles long. The track of this tornado went from one end of my farm to the other, destroying all my fences, barns, and damaging and nearly destroying our home. The very next morning the CED from our Farm Service Agency was out checking on the broken farms in his area. That's why we need local offices staffed with people that know the farmers and the land in their community. The counties that were affected by the storm were declared a disaster area and we received financial assistance to reimburse us for some of our expenses in rebuilding, without that help, I'm not sure what we would have done.

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I would like to see our marketing system kept as free as possible, but guarded against anyone taking undo advantage of that system.

To sum this all up basically what I'm saying is, when we are affected by natural disasters and forces beyond our control, be there with tools and the help we need to get back to the point we can continue to be productive. Give us the guidance and assistance we need to protect our soil and water, the most valuable resources we have. Keep rules and regulations to a minimum, but when there are mandates and rules that prevent the use of our land or the ability to produce an income from it we should be properly compensated.

Let us continue to do the job we should be doing, that is to produce the safest, most wholesome, and abundant food supply in the world.

Thank you again for this opportunity,

Dan Stewart.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Owen, again, when you are ready, sir.

STATEMENT OF JOHN E. OWEN, RICE, SOYBEAN, CORN, AND COTTON PRODUCER, JOHN AND ANNIE OWEN FARMS, RAYVILLE, LA

Mr. Owen. Chairman Lucas, Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing. I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony on the 2012 Farm Bill. My name is John Owen and I raise rice, corn, soybeans, and cotton in northeast Louisiana where my wife Anne and I have been farming together for 30 years. I also serve as President of the Louisiana Rice Growers Association and on several boards of the USA Rice Federation.

America's farmers can be proud of what we do. We have helped carry our nation through not one, but two economic recessions in the past 12 years. We have reduced our country's trade deficit, we have ensured that Americans spend less of their disposable income on food than anyone else in the world. We contribute to national security by producing our own food and fiber here at home and by feeding and clothing much of the world. And I firmly believe that the U.S. farm policy that we will discuss here today, a policy that costs a fraction of one percent of the entire Federal budget, is essential to continuing our success.

In short, U.S. agriculture is important to America and farm policy is important to U.S. agriculture.

Mr. Chairman, I have to admit I do not have a great deal of confidence in Washington these days. But I must say that you and your Ranking Member, Mr. Peterson, and your counterparts in the Senate demonstrated last year that not everything in that town is broken.

When my wife and I were talking about my testimony for this hearing and the kind of farm bill we would write this year under the kind of constraints that you were facing last year, we finally added it all up and concluded that it would look a whole lot like what you and Mr. Peterson developed last fall. All the key elements were there.

You started off by acknowledging that what works for the farmers that you heard from last week in Illinois may not work for Anne and me in Louisiana. We have different crops, a

different region and different risks. So importantly, you did not try to shove us all into some neat policy box that looks great in Washington, but falls apart on the farm. I really thank you for that.

Another thing you did was to make sure that farmers were not sold a bill of goods. Out of all the options that a producer could choose from in the 2011 bill that you put together, there was protection built into each of them to make sure that if prices fell through the floor, there would not be a crisis in farm country because a producer was allowed to pick a false choice.

I have seen a lot of revenue proposals out there, and nearly all of them do not have any price protection in them. If prices collapse, the revenue the producer is guaranteed collapses right along with it. I do not think all the producers realize this across the country. But I am relieved that you foresaw the problem and did something to prevent it.

On top of these extremely important things, both producer choice and price protection, you also worked to improve crop insurance, including nudging the USDA along to quickly develop some risk management products that might hold out some hope for rice producers, who have not had great success with crop insurance in the past. And you also decided to let the ink dry on payment limits and AGI rules that were written just 2 years ago. Every one of these things is important to Anne and my farm.

But I want to say one other thing. I know you took a lot of unfair flack for defending the rice provisions of the 2011 bill. Your standing up for us does not go unnoticed in rice country. We greatly appreciate that you recognized that all we came to the table with was the direct payment, and that was going to be gone. So you worked with us to give us a decent alternative that we can still take to our banker and get a loan.

In my 30 years in production agriculture, I have watched farm policy evolve through five farm bills. The best legislation built on previous farm policy and made adjustments that were improvements and updates, but not radical shifts in policy. I urge you to keep this in mind as you move forward drafting our next farm bill.

The bottom line is, I believe--and maybe more importantly my banker believes--the 2011 package that you put together serves as an excellent framework for you to develop the 2012 Farm Bill.

Thank you for allowing me this time to testify.
[The prepared statement of Mr. Owen follows:]

Prepared Statement of John E. Owen, Rice, Soybean, Corn, and Cotton
Producer, John and Annie Owen Farms, Rayville, LA

Introduction

Chairman Lucas, Ranking Member Peterson, and Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing concerning farm policy and the 2012 Farm Bill. I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony on farm policy from the perspective of a diversified producer.

My name is John Owen. I raise rice, soybeans, corn, and cotton in Richland Parish in northeastern Louisiana and I have been farming in partnership with my wife Anne for thirty years. In addition, I serve as President of the Louisiana Rice Growers Association and on several boards and committees of the USA Rice Federation, including the USA Rice Producers' Group.

Importance of Agriculture and Cost-Effective Farm Policy

The U.S. agriculture sector should be proud of our contributions to the U.S. economy. In a time of economic downturn, agriculture producers have managed to remain profitable, create new jobs, and provide consumers in the U.S. and all over the world with a safe and abundant supply of food and fiber.

While U.S. agriculture is critically important to America, farm policy is also critically important to U.S. agriculture.

I would urge lawmakers to reject cuts to U.S. farm policy that would exceed the level specified in the letter by the House and Senate Agriculture Committee Chairs and Ranking Members to the Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction last fall. I am concerned that an attempt to write a farm bill with budget reductions greater than the \$23 billion proposed last year will result in farm policy that is inadequate to meet the risk management needs of producers.

2008 Farm Bill Review

The 2008 Farm Bill continued the traditional mix of policies consisting of the non-recourse marketing loan, loan deficiency payments, and the direct and counter cyclical payments. This past farm bill made substantial changes to the payment eligibility provisions,

establishing an aggressive adjusted gross income (AGI) means test and significant tightening of "actively engaged" requirements for eligibility. The 2008 Farm Bill also included the addition of Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) as an alternative to counter cyclical payments for producers who agree to a reduction in direct payments and marketing loan benefits. The bill also added Supplemental Revenue Assurance (SURE) as a standing disaster assistance supplement to Federal crop insurance.

To be honest, neither ACRE or SURE has proved much value for the crops I grow on my farm. With some changes, a revenue-based policy may be workable for some crops in some growing regions. But for crops that I produce, I haven't seen a revenue-based proposal yet that would be effective in the Mid-South. And particularly as it relates to rice production in my part of the country, forcing me to depend on a revenue policy for risk management will leave me with little to no price protection, which is the main risk I face in rice. SURE has provided little, if any, assistance to producers in the Mid-South who suffered significant monetary losses in 2009 due to heavy rains and flooding occurring prior to and during harvest, or the significant losses last year as a result of spring flooding in the Mid-South. SURE's inability to provide disaster assistance for such catastrophic events further highlights the continuing gap in available policies designed to help producers manage or alleviate their risk.

Whatever its imperfections, the Direct Payment alone has assisted producers in meeting the ongoing and serious price and production perils of farming today. Direct payments have provided critically important capital to farmers that they could tailor to their unique needs. This capital was used to help finance production costs, cover shallow losses, and purchase crop insurance or to make capital improvements to farming operations. While other options to direct payments are being considered, we believe it will be very difficult to improve upon their effectiveness.

I believe we must focus on strengthening farm policies in the 2012 Farm Bill to help ensure that all producers have the ability to adequately manage their risks and access needed credit.

Crop Insurance

Crops grown in the Mid-South have traditionally been under-served by crop insurance. As a result, we have on average lower coverage levels and higher premium costs for most of our crops. This situation has been improving in recent years, but we are still far from the day when I as a Mid-South producer can say that crop insurance is the most important part of farm policy for me. In fact, I think it is inappropriate to believe that crop insurance can ever be the sole policy producers rely on for risk management. Crop insurance is designed to cover production shortfalls or price declines in a single year. It is not designed to protect against price declines over multiple years. And I find myself asking the question, and let me be clear I hope we don't see this happen, but if crop prices decline again in a scenario like we saw in the late 1990's how effective is crop insurance going to be then? If corn prices are \$2.50/bushel and soybean prices are \$5.00/bushel it is clear that a crop insurance revenue policy is not going to be of much help to me as a producer with prices at these levels.

From a rice grower's perspective I have additional concerns about crop insurance. The risk management products offered under Federal Crop Insurance have been of very limited value due to a number of factors, including artificially depressed actual production history (APH) guarantees, which I understand is also a problem for many other producers; high premium costs for a relatively small insurance guarantee; a lack of convergence between the cash and futures prices for rice; and the fact that the risks associated with rice production are unique from the risks of producing many other major crops.

What rice farmers like I need from Federal crop insurance are products that will help protect against increased production and input costs, particularly for energy and energy-related inputs. For example, fuel, fertilizer, and other energy related inputs represent about 70 percent of total variable costs.

As such, rice producers enter the 2012 Farm Bill debate at a very serious disadvantage, having only a single farm policy that effectively works and that farm policy being singled out for elimination.

Commodity Futures Market

Another risk management tool that is becoming more important for me as a producer is the use of the commodity futures market to hedge my price risks for the crops I produce. As we see the coming changes in the farm bill, I think the ability to effectively use the futures market to price and market our crops will become imperative. Today I have the ability to hedge the corn and soybeans I produce, but with rice I am limited in the opportunity to hedge the crop due to issues with the rice futures contract. The contract has suffered from a lack of convergence between cash prices and the futures prices, and in some

cases there has been a negative basis as wide as \$4/cwt. For the other crops I produce, I am able to hedge my prices successfully, but for the rice we grow, I am unable to do so.

2012 Farm Bill

First and foremost, I believe that the 2012 Farm Bill should be reauthorized this year.

I know that due to budget restrictions, it will be necessary to write the upcoming farm bill with fewer resources than have been available in the past. Furthermore, some farm policies must be modified to satisfy specific trade objectives as a result of the U.S.-Brazil WTO case. The continuation of a multi-legged stool that includes the marketing loan, countercyclical payments and the best mix of risk management tools for producers.

I believe that the planting flexibility provided under the 1996 Farm Bill and the countercyclical policies that have been in place for more than a decade now have served this nation and its farmers well. In addition, the non-recourse marketing loan still serves an important function by allowing producers the ability to utilize the loan for the marketing of their crops. This is particularly important in both the rice and cotton industries.

Given the aforementioned budget pressures and other considerations facing Congress, I believe that the following priorities represent the needs of producers in crops here in the Mid-South:

First, the triggering mechanism for assistance should be updated to provide tailored and reliable help should commodity prices decline below today's production costs, and should include a floor or reference price to protect in multi-year low price scenarios.

Second, as payments would only be made in loss situations, payment limits and means tests for producers should be eliminated, or at a minimum not tightened any further.

Third, Federal crop insurance should be improved to provide more effective risk management for all crops in all production regions, beginning with the policy development process.

Price Protection is Key

I believe the main purpose of farm policy is to provide protection in the event of price declines, which are beyond the control of producers. As noted earlier crop insurance can't provide this protection across multiple years, and only protects against price declines within a growing season. My understanding of the farm bill package developed last fall by this Committee and your counterparts in the Senate is that it included reference prices at levels more relevant to today's cost of production and this reference price would provide a floor for both a price-based option and a revenue-based option. I think this is the most critical component of the next farm bill and must be included in any policy option.

To use rice for an example, price volatility is the primary risk producers face that they do not have other good means of protecting against, with price fluctuations largely driven by global supply and demand. Rice is one of the most protected and sensitive global commodities in trade negotiations, thus limiting access to a number of key markets. Costs of production have risen to a point where the current \$6.50 (loan rate)/\$10.50 (target price) assistance triggers are largely irrelevant. So I believe the first priority should be to concentrate on increasing the prices or revenue levels at which farm policy would trigger so that it is actually meaningful to producers, and would reliably trigger should prices decline sharply.

The reference price for rice should be increased to \$13.98/cwt (\$6.30/bu). This level would more closely reflect the significant increases in production costs for rice on our farm. And this reference price should be a component of both the price-loss policy and the revenue-loss policy to ensure downside price protection.

Options for Different Production Regions

Another important concept that I believe should be reflected in the next farm bill is producer choices or options. It is easy to see that not only are there significant differences in the policy needs of various crops, but there are different risk management needs for the same crop in different growing regions.

Whether it is the rice or corn on my farm in northeast Louisiana, I have a different view of what policy will work best on my farm relative to corn in Iowa or rice in California. Again, using rice as an example, here in the Mid-South and the Gulf Coast production regions, a price-based policy is viewed as being most effective in meeting our risk management needs. Specifically, this policy should include a price protection level that is more relevant to current cost of production; paid on planted acres or percentage of planted acres; paid on more current yields; and take into account the lack of effective crop

insurance policies for commodities like rice.

However, my friends producing rice in California have analyzed the potential for a revenue-based policy that could work better in their area to provide effective risk management. Efforts to analyze modifications which will increase the effectiveness of revenue plan continue. Since rice yields are highly correlated between the farm, county, crop reporting district, and state levels, a revenue plan should be administered for rice at either the county or crop reporting district level to reflect this situation rather than lowering guarantee levels to use farm level yields. By setting loss triggers that reflect local marketing conditions, delivering support sooner, and strengthening revenue guarantees that account for higher production costs as well as the absence of effective crop insurance, California rice producers are hopeful that an effective revenue option can be developed.

Different perils confront producers of different crops. Producers need a choice, just as producers were also allowed choices in the 2008 Farm Bill. A necessary part of providing a real choice is to ensure that each option, revenue-based or priced-based, provides effective protection in the event of price declines, particularly in multiyear low price scenarios.

Tailored and Defendable Policy

I believe it makes sense to provide assistance when factors beyond our control create losses. Generally more tailored farm policies are more defendable. For this reason, I like the thought of updating bases and yields or applying farm policies to planted acres/current production and their triggering based on prices or revenue, depending on the option a producer chooses.

Planting Flexibility

Direct payments are excellent in this regard. SURE or similar whole farm aggregations tend to discourage diversification, which could be a problem for farms in my area and across the Mid-South where we tend to have very diversified farms. Whatever is done should accommodate history and economics and allow for proportional reductions to the baseline among commodities. Some commodities are currently more reliant on countercyclical farm policies (ACRE/CCP) while others are receiving only Direct Payments in the baseline. Generally, the least disruptive and fairest way to achieve savings across commodities would be to apply a percentage reduction to each commodity baseline and restructure any new policy within the reduced baseline amounts.

I know there have been concerns raised about higher reference prices distorting planting decisions and resulting in significant acreage shifts including for rice. I have not seen analysis that shows significant acreage shifts resulting from the reference price levels included in the 2011 Farm Bill package. In fact, for rice specifically, a reference price of \$13.98/cwt that is paid on historic CCP payment yields and on 85% of planted acres results in a reference price level well below my average cost of production, so I find it hard to imagine why someone would plant simply due to this policy given these levels.

Crop Insurance Should Be Maintained and Improved

Although crop insurance does not currently work as well for rice as it does for other crops, the third priority would be to improve availability and effectiveness of crop insurance for rice as an available option. I would also support improvement to the product development processes (we have struggled with two 508(h) submissions for over 4 years and are still not completed with the process), and to the APH system such that any farmer's insurable yield (pre-deductible) would be reflective of what that farmer actually expects to produce. In no case should the crop insurance tools, which are purchased by the producer, be encumbered with environmental/conservation regulation or other conditions that fall outside the scope of insurance.

2011 Budget Control Act Efforts

Although the details of the 2011 Farm Bill package that was prepared by the House and Senate Agriculture Committees in response to the Budget Control Act were not disclosed, based on discussions and reports I believe that package at least represents a good framework on which to build the 2012 Farm Bill. The 2011 package included a choice of risk management tools that producers can tailor to the risks on their own farms, providing under each of those options more meaningful price protection that is actually relevant to today's production costs and prices. It also included provisions to improve crop insurance and expedite product development for under-served crops such as rice.

I would note that the effective support for rice producers under the price-based option was set well below cost of production and that late changes to the revenue-based option minimized its potential as an effective risk management tool for any rice producers, and that pay limits and AGI rules would still serve as an arbitrary constraint upon U.S. competitiveness globally. Still, even with these areas for improvement, I want to express my appreciation to the Members and staff that put enormous time and effort into what I believe represents a good

blue print for ongoing farm bill deliberations.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer my testimony today and I will be pleased to respond to any questions.

The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Owen.
Mr. Corcoran, whenever you are ready.

STATEMENT OF WALTER L. CORCORAN, Jr., COTTON, CORN,
PEANUT, SOYBEAN, GRAIN SORGHUM, AND COW/CALF
PRODUCER, EUFAULA, AL

Mr. Corcoran. I would like to thank Chairman Lucas and the Members of the Committee for the opportunity to provide my views on U.S. farm policy. I would also like to express my gratitude to Congressman Rick Crawford for hosting this very important hearing.

My name is Walt Corcoran from Eufaula, Alabama. Along with my brother, nephew and our wives, we operate a diversified family farming operation in both Georgia and Alabama. Our principal crops include cotton, corn, peanuts, soybeans, and grain sorghum. We also manage a 500 head cow/calf operation. The majority of my crop production is dryland with about 1/3 irrigated using surface water.

A sound and stable farm policy is critically important to the economic viability of U.S. agriculture. I fully support the Committee's commitment to conclude a farm bill in 2012. It is critically important to provide certainty to those of us involved in production agriculture since we make long-term investment decisions based in part on Federal farm policy.

The 2008 Farm Bill has worked very well for my operation. The combination of marketing loan, direct payment, and countercyclical payments have provided a good safety net. I appreciate the budget pressure facing this Committee and all of Congress. Those pressures will lead to reduced funding for the next farm bill and I want to stress that agriculture is willing to contribute an equitable share to deficit reduction. But I encourage this Committee to fight efforts to impose a disproportionate burden on farm programs.

In addition to budget pressures, the cotton industry faces a unique challenge in resolving the longstanding dispute with Brazil. Because of these challenges, the National Cotton Council has proposed an innovative revenue-based crop insurance program known as STAX. This product replaces the direct and countercyclical payments for cotton; thus, directly addressing one of the programs found to be at fault in the WTO dispute. In the opinion of the U.S. cotton industry, this structure will best utilize reduced budget resources, respond to public criticism by directing benefits directly to growers, and builds on the existing crop insurance programs.

The findings of the WTO case also require that changes be made in the marketing loan for upland cotton as part of the development of the 2012 Farm Bill. I also encourage this Committee to follow the industry's recommendation to introduce a formula for determining the marketing loan level. That formula will allow the marketing loan to adjust lower in times of lower prices. The loan rate for a crop will be determined in the fall prior to planting the crop and will have a range from 52 to 47 .

The House and Senate Agriculture Committees' proposal to the Joint Budget Committee recognized the fact that because of the diversity of crop needs, a one-size-fits-all approach is not practical. I encourage your Committee to continue this approach in your deliberations and tailor the various programs to fit the needs and constraints of the individual commodities.

Farmers understand that agriculture is an extremely risky endeavor, but we also understand that effective risk management is the key to long-term viability.

Like the vast majority of farming operations across the Cotton Belt, crop insurance and risk management tools are critically important to my economic livelihood. Given the diversity of weather and production practices, the menu of insurance choices should be diverse and customizable, thus allowing for maximum participation and the most effective coverage. I have crop insurance on most of my crops. Last year, because of the severe drought, it provided a measure of risk protection that was critical to my farming operation. I strongly urge that crop insurance not be weakened during this farm bill.

In 2008, the introduction of enterprise unit pricing gave us one more option for insuring against risks that are beyond

our control. I encourage the continuation of this option.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to make these brief comments.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Corcoran follows:]

Prepared Statement of Walter L. Corcoran, Jr., Cotton, Corn, Peanut, Soybean, Grain Sorghum, and Cow/Calf Producer, Eufaula, AL
Good morning. I would like to thank Chairman Lucas, Ranking Member Peterson, and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to provide my views on U.S. farm policy. I would also like to express my gratitude to Congressman Rick Crawford for hosting this very important hearing. My name is Walt Corcoran, Jr. from Eufaula, Alabama. I along with my brother, nephew and our wives, operate a diversified family farm operation in both Georgia and Alabama. Our principal row crops include cotton, corn, peanuts, soybeans and grain sorghum. We also manage a 500 head cow/calf herd. The majority of my crop production is dryland with about 1/3 of my acreage using surface water irrigation.

A sound and stable farm policy is critically important to the economic viability of U.S. agriculture--I appreciate the dedication and diligent work of this Committee during last fall's attempt at a joint deficit reduction package. While that effort did not advance a farm bill conclusion I fully support the Committee's commitment to conclude a farm bill in 2012. It is critically important to provide certainty to those of us involved in production agriculture since we make long-term investment decisions based on Federal farm policy.

The 2008 Farm Bill has worked very well for my operation. The combination of the marketing loan, Direct Payments and Counter-cyclical Payments has provided a good safety net, and in recent years, has required minimal Federal spending. I appreciate the budget pressures facing this Committee and all of Congress. Those pressures will lead to reduced funding for the next farm bill. I want to stress that agriculture is willing to contribute an equitable share to deficit reduction, but I encourage this Committee to fight efforts to impose a disproportionate burden on farm programs. We support your Committee's recommendation of \$23 billion in budget savings as an equitable contribution to deficit reduction.

In addition to budget pressures, this Committee is well aware that the cotton industry faces the unique challenge of resolving the long-standing trade dispute with Brazil. Because of these challenges, the National Cotton Council has proposed an innovative revenue-based crop insurance program known as STAX. This product replaces the direct and countercyclical payments for cotton, thus directly addressing one of the programs found to be at fault in the WTO dispute. In the opinion of the U.S. cotton industry, this structure will best utilize reduced budget resources, respond to public criticism by directing benefits to growers who suffer losses resulting from factors beyond their control, and build on the existing crop insurance program, thus ensuring no duplication of coverage and allowing for program simplification.

The findings in the WTO case also require that changes be made to the marketing loan for upland cotton as part of the development of the 2012 Farm Bill. I also encourage this Committee to follow the industry's recommendation to introduce a formula for determining the marketing loan level. That formula will allow the marketing loan to adjust lower in times of low prices. The loan rate for a crop will be determined in the fall prior to planting the crop and be set equal to the average of the AWP for the two most recently completed marketing years provided the 2 year moving average falls within a set maximum of \$0.52 and a minimum level of \$0.47.

Other existing features of the upland cotton marketing loan should be retained in the next farm bill. These include an effective determination of the Adjusted World Price for purposes of loan redemption in times of low prices. as well as the provision of storage credits should the loan redemption price fall below the loan rate.

The House and Senate Agriculture Committee proposal to the Joint Budget Committee recognized the fact that because of the diversity of crop needs, a one-size-fits-all approach is not practical. I encourage your Committee to continue this approach in your deliberations and tailor the various programs to fit the needs and constraints of the individual commodities.

Farmers understand that agriculture is an extremely risky endeavor, but they also understand that effective risk management is the key to long-term viability. While the goal of farm programs is not to completely remove the risk associated with farming, farm programs should strive to provide opportunities for effective risk management.

Like the vast majority of farming operations across the Cotton Belt, crop insurance and risk management tools are critically important to my economic livelihood. Given the diversity of weather and production practices, the menu of insurance choices should be diverse and customizable, thus allowing for maximum participation and the most effective coverage. I have crop insurance coverage on most of my crops.

Last year, because of the severe drought conditions, it provided a measure of risk protection that was critical to the economic viability of my farming operation.

I strongly urge that crop insurance not be weakened during this farm bill. In today's environment of volatile prices and high input costs, effective risk management has never been more important.

In 2008, the introduction of enterprise unit pricing gave producers one more option for insuring against those risks that are beyond their control. I encourage the continuation of that option in the 2012 Farm Bill.

Mr. Chairman, my brief comments do not provide an exhaustive look at the many important programs included in the current farm legislation. That said, there are a couple or others I would point out. Assistance for our U.S. textile mills was introduced in the 2008 Farm Bill, and I encourage that program to be continued in the next farm law. In recent years, conservation programs have become increasingly important and I hope those programs will remain useful options. Thank you for the opportunity to offer these, and I look forward to the opportunity to answer questions at the appropriate time.

The Chairman. Thank you, sir. And I now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

Mr. Owen, in your written statement you said, "It is inappropriate to believe that crop insurance can ever be the sole policy producers rely upon for risk management." Sole policy. Expand just--and you did a good job in your testimony. Expand just a little bit more on that if you would for the record.

Mr. Owen. Well, the main problem with using crop insurance as the sole basis risk management is that crop insurance cannot protect you against a multi-year low price scenario such as we experienced in the late 1990s. The indemnities for crop insurance or the triggers are set in the winter and they are generally based off Chicago Board of Trade futures, and when those prices are low, then you have a product that provides no protection from the beginning. So without an underlying reference price, either countercyclical or through a revenue assurance policy offered through the government that is economically viable, then crop insurance is not a long-term safety net for agriculture in the Mid-South, or as far as I can see, anywhere in the country.

The Chairman. Very insightful plan, sir.

Mr. Stewart, you mentioned the importance of disaster programs. So as a fellow cattleman, I ask this question and if you do not mind me asking, have you participated in any of the livestock disaster programs offered under the 2008 Farm Bill--the Livestock Forage Program or the Livestock Indemnity Program?

Mr. Stewart. What I have participated in is the NAP, the non-insured disaster program. The LA--there are a lot of letters and acronyms and it is almost like learning a new language.

The Chairman. Yes.

Mr. Stewart. But we did not qualify. It is pretty hard to qualify in that Livestock Forage Program, so we did not. But I have received payments from the NAP Program, which is the non-insured. And as far as the Livestock Indemnity Program, I do keep records of losses in case I would qualify, but so far I have personally been lucky enough that I have not had to use the LIP program.

The Chairman. One other question, Mr. Stewart. You mentioned ethanol just a moment ago. From your perspective as a cattleman, some would argue, with 45, maybe 50 percent of the corn crop on average in the last couple of years going through the ethanol cookers, that it has no real effect on the supply of corn or the availability of feed. What do you think of that comment that some people make.

Mr. Stewart. Well, that seems to be hard to believe. I do not think the corn crop as a whole has gone up that much. First, they were talking about the distiller's grain, but it seems like that has not--we have not been able to utilize that as a feed source like we were once led to believe.

The Chairman. On the previous panel, my colleague from Arkansas noted about the Conservation Reserve Program and we are seeing in some of the re-enrollments the acres come down, which of course, CRP is a voluntary conservation program and I am a great believer in voluntary conservation programs, by the way, for the record. But as those CRP acres come down, that seems to imply that producers are assessing grain prices and determining we have to have more production. My cattlemen, pork

producers, poultry people, and turkey people at home tell me in a pretty straight-forward way that the feed supplies have been really tight the last 2 years. Do you see that when you buy your 20 percent pellets?

Mr. Stewart. Yes, I do, sir.

The Chairman. So we have to have more grain. You would agree with that statement.

Mr. Stewart. Yes, in order to keep the price where we can afford it. You know, if you have the money, you can buy it, but it makes it tough. And I know right now, cattle prices are good, but as we all know, they do not last.

The Chairman. Exactly. Exactly. Looks like my time is about to expire.

I now turn to the gentleman from Texas for 5 minutes, Mr. Neugebauer.

Mr. Neugebauer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Hundley, you mentioned that you were opposed to means testing. A lot of folks are opposed to large farming operations getting farm payments. I think in your testimony, you said it would be detrimental to the family farms in Arkansas. Do you want to elaborate on that?

Mr. Hundley. Yes. I think as you see from the previous panel and this panel, the one thing that lenders and people that extend credit like right now is the guarantee that a deficiency payment provides. Not so much the deficiency payment, but the guarantee. And I think means testing in itself is almost a failed attempt to regulate a failed policy. You know, the safety net that we need needs to be a safety net that is available to every farm on every acre on every crop, regardless of their size or their business structure. And I think from that standpoint is what I referred to as means testing would be detrimental to Arkansas farmers if it was just you draw a line in the sand and say okay, you get it, you do not.

Mr. Neugebauer. Mr. Owen, you mentioned that reform to crop insurance you thought would be an integral part of the next farm bill. One of the things that we are going to have to do is make choices because in this budget environment we feel like we are going to be obviously dealing with a smaller amount of funds to put together a good comprehensive farm policy in the future.

Of the current policy that we have; in other words, talking about looking at the baskets we have now, in your operation, what do you think is the most important farm program that exists today that we should work really hard to preserve. If you had to pick one. And I know that is difficult and I am not saying we are going to have to do that, but I am just trying-- we are going to have to prioritize this and we are trying to get your thoughts.

Mr. Owen. It is not as difficult as you would imagine. For my operation, countercyclical program is by far the most important and the most defensible to the city people. Having a meaningful reference price that we can take to a bank to get financed, having a loan program that we can use to aid our marketing is the most important. We need price protection and we need yield protection. Price protection has to come from the countercyclical type program. Yield protection should come from insurance. And the most important factor by far though to my operation is a countercyclical program with a reference price that is meaningful.

Mr. Neugebauer. You know, one of the things that we have seen is the countercyclical payments have actually performed extremely well over the last few years, and that is the way the program was designed, was when the price was low obviously you had that safety net. But in many commodities, for the last few years obviously, countercyclical payments have not come into play. So that is a program--unfortunately that is one of the programs that we have had trouble with the WTO. So obviously that is something we will have to address.

Mr. Stewart, in this environment where we have just come out of in Texas some pretty severe droughts and some other parts of the country, what are some of the biggest challenges for the cow/calf producer today?

Mr. Stewart. Well, like you say, regardless of whether you attribute it to global warming or weather cycles or what, but it seems like we are in a system of extremes. In our area, we can have floods, massive floods all spring. Summer gets here and we do not get another drop until next winter. And that seems to be one of the biggest challenges as far as our forage production.

Other issues--like most farmers and ranchers, we like to look ahead and plan for the worst. And there are environmental issues that possibly will be out there. Some of them, like the dust issue, they say that was just a myth, but it concerns a lot of farmers. And I would like to see some assurance that stuff like that will not affect us in the future.

Mr. Neugebauer. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas, Mr. Crawford, for 5 minutes.

Mr. Crawford. Real quick, we were talking with Mr. Stewart. I want to talk about something that has been brought to my attention by a number of folks. The testimony you gave regarding your experience as a child and just kind of describing the family dynamic on your farm.

The Department of Labor issued a proposed regulation in regards to children working on farms, and to my knowledge, no ag group obviously supported that initial proposal. But since the backlash, the Department has said they will repropose the regulation involving the parental exemption section only. Have you read anything about that? And what would be the impact on a family farm like yours if they were to tell you that you could not allow your children to participate in production agriculture?

Mr. Stewart. Well, I personally think it would be devastating to the family farm, because at an early age, my thought is you need to instill a love for farming. Farming in our area especially is more than just an economic thing. It is a way of life and something that you have to really want to do because at times it is tough. And if you do not love what you do, you are not going to stay in it. And if you instill that in your children and grandchildren at an early age, we can continue to have our family farms.

Mr. Crawford. Excellent, thank you.

Mr. Freeze, the Arkansas fish growing industry has been in decline for the past few decades. Can you talk about some of the factors that have contributed to that decline? And in crafting the next farm bill, what would the suggestions be to address those issues?

Mr. Freeze. Well, of course, the rising input cost, your increase in feed and increase in energy costs, et cetera. They affect the aquaculture industry or fish farms just like they do other farmers. But probably this unlevel playing field that was referred to with the seafood inspection is one of the big issues. I think this Committee tried to correct that in the 2008 Farm Bill, but it has been almost 4 years now and still the inspection of catfish coming into the United States has not been transferred from FDA to FSIS. FSIS started inspections and we are wondering how much longer this is going to take.

So other than that, some of the regulatory issues that I talked about. I mean, I know all farmers feel as if they are over-regulated but I think if you will add it up, for a fish farmer, we are regulated by something like 30 to 40 different state and Federal agencies. And it is just a real problem.

Mr. Crawford. Thank you.

In the time I have left, Mr. Hundley, many of the Members of this Committee see farmers as the best stewards of the land and I think certainly those Members that are present would agree with that. But the EPA seems to think differently about that. Congress has given producers the tools through cost-share programs and voluntary incentive-based programs to improve water, soil and air quality. Can you talk about the importance of conservation programs in dealing with potential regulations that we may be seeing with respect to EPA?

Mr. Hundley. I need to think about how to say this. When you mention EPA, one of the problems, you say that there are programs to help us mitigate some of those regulations. What I see right now, it seems that we have an agency that is out there making rules and trying to enforce rules that have sidestepped even the Committee or even Congress sometimes. It seems like, for instance, the fuel containment deal. I mean just all of a sudden, here it comes. I don't want to look a gift horse in the mouth on some of these programs that we have to help offset these, but you know, we feel that the EPA is over-reaching sometimes and we feel like you all should have some input before it ever comes to us as an implementation of a law.

Mr. Crawford. Okay. A little time left.

Mr. Corcoran, you want to comment on that with respect to EPA on your farm?

Mr. Corcoran. Just as he was saying, they over-reach. I think they are implementing or putting rules on us before we know what is going on. As far as point source pollution in our state. We had a big problem with trying to regulate--I think it is everywhere--the waters under the Clean Water Act, trying to regulate the nozzle as a point-source source of pollution. They are far over-reaching regulations and we need to rein them in somehow.

Mr. Crawford. Mr. Owen, final thought.

Mr. Owen. Well, first of all, I would say that farmers are the original active environmentalists, instead of being environmental activists. And EPA does need to be reined in. We are excellent stewards of the land and I would put our record up against any country as far as the way we take care of our land, the way our pesticides are regulated, the way we use our pesticides. We have a fabulous track record and we do not need further regulation.

Mr. Crawford. Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Stutzman, to conclude the questions for this panel. You are recognized for 5 minutes, sir.

Mr. Stutzman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As we all know, there is plenty of volatility in agriculture. As we see yesterday corn prices were down, today corn and soybean prices are up 30 cents and 50 cents, just due to crop reports. You know, we see a lot of volatility. Many folks out East do not understand those challenges. We are always trying to play--we have to play two sides of the game. You have input costs and then you have your commodity prices that affect us.

I appreciate Congressman Crawford so much. Being a corn and soybean farmer from northern Indiana, rice is really a new crop to me. I do not understand the complexities that you all face. And one of the comments that Mr. Owen, you had in your testimony, I would like to direct this question to Mr. Owen and Mr. Corcoran. In your testimony, Mr. Owen, you cite "What rice farmers like I need from Federal crop insurance are products that would help protect against increased production and input costs, particularly for energy and energy-related inputs. For example, field fertilizer and other energy-related inputs represent about 70 percent of total variable costs."

I know for myself as a corn and soybean farmer, I have about the exact same situation for us. It is volatility in the input side. Can you give me an idea--we are seeing a lot of volatility in the corn and soybean markets. What are you seeing on the rice side? I just have not followed those prices. What is different about rice from corn and soybeans?

Mr. Owen. Well, first of all, rice has been working towards, for the last 4 years with RMA trying to develop a policy that would provide us with rising input protections in fuel and fertilizer primarily. And the main thing that is different about rice is the cost of running irrigation pumps. When we have a drought scenario--and you have a 100 horsepower motor on average in the Mid-South, 100 horsepower motor turning 24 hours a day trying to keep water on 100 acres of rice. Well, most rice farmers are farming 750 to 1,500 acres of rice in their rotational mix. That is a significant consumption of diesel. And also when we have fertilizer price spikes such as in 2008, it just runs your production cost through the roof. So we are working with RMA to try to develop a product for rice, which may very well work for corn and soybeans after it is developed and up, but this is a pilot program that we are trying to get through and developed. But I would say the amount of diesel and electricity required to run irrigation systems in drought periods is our main cost of running up our fuel.

Mr. Stutzman. And Mr. Corcoran, if you could talk a little bit about the price of rice and how that market works.

Mr. Corcoran. I am not a producer of rice.

Mr. Stutzman. Oh, I am sorry, you are cotton. I am sorry about that.

Mr. Owen and Mr. Hundley, if you could maybe comment on that.

Mr. Hundley. Excuse me, the question again?

Mr. Stutzman. We see a lot of volatility in corn and soybeans and I am a northern Indiana farmer and as Mr. Stewart mentioned, ethanol has obviously played a huge impact in those prices. Could you talk about the rice market? Do you see the same volatility and what are the factors that affect the price of rice.

Mr. Hundley. I think one of the things that I see with rice is we do not have--the futures market is not an effective place to hedge. Where you as a corn farmer, I mean, you can go in and daily trade corn or soybean futures as an effective hedge, and in rice, we do not have that.

I have some opinions of why that is, but I do not know if it is true. A lot of the end-users do not use hedging as an effective tool. So I think that is the biggest difference.

Mr. Owen. Mr. Stutzman, we are taking some steps and working with CME and the rice industry to try to improve convergence in futures. Another difference is rice is--you know, the United States only grows about three percent of the world's rice crop. However, we are the third or fourth largest exporter of rice. And 96 percent, or 95 percent of the rice grown in the world is consumed where it is grown. So the five percent that is left for export can be extremely volatile in price. Currently we are dealing with countries that are subsidizing their exports, India, Thailand and Brazil at this point. So that changes the dynamic a little bit.

And rice is an expensive crop to grow. Hopefully we will get these things ironed out with the ability to hedge rice like we use futures for corn and soybeans and wheat and cotton, but we are not there yet. But we are working on it.

Mr. Stutzman. Well, my wife for some reason keeps putting more rice on our plate at home, so you must be getting to her, so we are trying to do our part and help consume the rice crop.

Mr. Owen. It is good for you.

Mr. Stutzman. It is good for you. With that, I will yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired, all time has expired.

Before we begin the process of concluding this hearing, I would like to take just a moment once again to thank Congressman Crawford for working very diligently to suggest the quality of hearing we could have and the different perspectives we could bring together. You were absolutely right, Rick, about that.

And I would also like to thank Arkansas State University for these wonderful facilities. Rarely do we have this quality of a facility to have a field hearing in; thank you very much, staff, faculty, administration for that.

And also, and I much attribute this to the fact that he was an old House Member before he went to that other body on the other side of the building in Washington, D.C., I would like to note on behalf of the Committee a very special appreciation to Arkansas's own Senator Boozman for coming and spending a half a day with us. As a Member of the Senate Agriculture Committee and a representative of this great ag state, he is just as concerned and focused as we are all here today on trying to figure out the things we need to determine so as to craft that next farm bill. So raise your hand, John, you cannot hide over there. Senators are Senators, you know.

[Applause.]

The Chairman. And with that, I would like to invite the gentleman from Arkansas, Mr. Crawford, to offer any closing remarks that he might have.

Mr. Crawford. I thank the Chairman for his work in leading the Agriculture Committee in the House of Representatives. I want to say a particular word of thank you to the staff, the Committee staff, who do the hard work and the heavy lifting. They have done a wonderful job and I also want to thank the staff here at ASU for hosting us today.

From the testimony we have heard this morning, it is obvious that our farmers face many challenges. I am encouraged though that as the Agriculture Committee begins the task of writing a new farm bill, that we will be able to protect farmers here in Arkansas and the Mid-South and across the country.

So last, let me encourage everyone who did not get a chance to have their comments heard, that we do want to hear from you, you can submit your written comments for the record up until May 20, you can do that online at www.house.agriculture.gov/farmbill. That is a tough one to remember, get with us after the hearing and we will be glad to write that down for you. Again, you have until May 20 to submit your comments and we do want to hear from you. Your opinion is very important.

Thank you so much, everyone for being here. And with that, I yield back to the Chairman.

The Chairman. The gentleman yields back.

Any other closing comments from my colleagues?

[No response.]

The Chairman. Seeing none, thank you all again for being here today. I think we have heard some truly valuable input today and I would like to especially thank our witnesses for their time and their willingness to answer questions to the extent they have.

As I said when we started, there are some challenges that vary by region and we need to tailor farm policy to reflect those unique requirements. I think it is also true farmers and ranchers across the country share some of the same experiences. So whether you raise fish in Arkansas or cotton in Mississippi or peanuts in Georgia, corn in Alabama or rice in Missouri and Louisiana, you want the same things. You want smart policies that allow you to keep producing food and fiber for America. Your input is important as a piece of this puzzle in putting together a farm bill that works for all farmers in all regions, all parts of the country.

Once again, as my colleague Congressman Crawford said, if you want to submit comments, opinions and have it included in the official record, go to agriculture.house.gov/farmbill and fill out that form and send it back to us. Your perspective is vital to the process and I thank you all for participating today.

Under the rules of the Committee, the record of today's hearing will remain open for 30 calendar days to receive additional information and supplementary written responses from witnesses to any question posed by a Member.

This hearing of the United States House Committee on Agriculture is adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 10:53 a.m. (CDT), the Committee was adjourned.]

THE FUTURE OF U.S. FARM POLICY: FORMULATION OF THE 2012 FARM BILL

FRIDAY, APRIL 20, 2012

House of Representatives,
Committee on Agriculture,
Dodge City, KS.

The Committee met, pursuant to call, at 9:00 a.m. (CDT), at the Magouirk Conference Center, 4100 W. Comanche, Dodge City, Kansas, 67801, Hon. Frank D. Lucas [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Members present: Representatives Lucas, Conaway, and Huelskamp.

Staff present: Bart Fischer, Matt Schertz, Nicole Scott, Heather Vaughan, Suzanne Watson, John Konya, and Caleb Crosswhite.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. FRANK D. LUCAS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM OKLAHOMA

The Chairman. This hearing of the Committee on Agriculture entitled, The Future of U.S. Farm Policy: Formulation of the 2012 Farm Bill, will come to order.

Good morning. Thank you all for joining us today for our final farm bill field hearing. Congressman Huelskamp, thank you for hosting us in your district. I like doing things in the neighborhood, coming from just across the line to the south, and I want to thank all of our witnesses for joining us today and extend a particular welcome to Scott Neufeld, who's come up from my great State of Oklahoma. I'll talk about him a little later.

This hearing is a continuation of a process that started in the spring of 2010. Today, we'll build upon the information we've gathered in those hearings, as well as the 11 farm policy audits we conducted this past summer.

We used those audits as an opportunity to fairly evaluate farm programs to identify areas where we could improve efficiency.

The field hearings serve a slightly different purpose, though. Today, we're here to listen. I talk to producers all the time back in Oklahoma. I see them at the feed store; I meet them in my town hall meetings; and of course, I get regular updates from my boss, Linda Lucas, back home on the ranch. Yes, those of you who know Linda understand exactly what I mean by

that, but I can tell you that the past three field hearings have demonstrated the tremendous diversity of agriculture in this country.

We started in New York, where the farming operations tend to be smaller, and there are probably more trees in one acre than you have in most counties in the Big First District of Kansas, Tim. We learned how farm policy affects specialty crop growers and dairy producers in the Northeast.

Next was Illinois, where we saw vast corn and soybean fields and heard how crop insurance is a critical risk management tool for farmers in the Corn Belt.

In Arkansas, we saw quite a few irrigated fields, and yes, as a western Okie, I was a little envious of that, and we heard why crop insurance isn't quite as effective of a risk management tool in the Southeast.

Today, we'll hear from a wide variety of producers who will no doubt have a different perspective than we got in those other regions. That's why it's so important that we offer a choice of policy options. The broad range of agricultural production in our country is what makes our country strong, and it also creates challenges, when we're trying to write a single farm bill that supports so many different regions and commodities.

While each sector has unique concerns when it comes to farm policy, I'd like to share some of my general goals for the next farm bill. First and foremost, I want to give producers the tools to help you do what you do best, and that is produce the safest, most abundant, most affordable food supply literally in the history of the world.

To do this, we must develop a farm bill that works for all regions and all commodities. It has to take into account the diversity of agriculture in America. Even within commodities, different programs work better for different regions, and that's why it's virtually important--vital, I should say, important that the commodity title give producers options so they can choose the program that works best for them, whether it is by protecting revenue or price.

I'm also committed to providing a strong crop insurance program for our producers. The Committee has heard loud and clear the importance of crop insurance, and it will be the backbone of our safety net. We will look for areas to improve crop insurance as we move forward.

Last, we will work to ensure that producers can continue using conservation programs to protect our natural resources. I'm particularly curious as to your thoughts on how to simplify the process so they are easier for our farmers and ranchers to use.

Beyond those priorities, I know there are a number of universal concerns facing agriculture across the country. For instance, my producers in Oklahoma are worried about regulations coming down from the Environmental Protection Agency, the EPA, and how they must comply with those regulations. I'm also aware that the death tax is creating difficulties for farming operations. I want to hear how these Federal policies are affecting producers here.

Today, we'll be hearing from a selection of producers. Unfortunately, we don't have time to hear from everybody who would like to share their perspectives, but we have a place on our website where you can submit your comments in writing. You can visit agriculture.house.gov/farmbill to find that form. You can also find the address on postcards that are available around the room, I believe.

As I said before, we don't have an easy road ahead of us, but I'm confident that by working together, we can craft a farm bill that continues to support the successful story that American agriculture is; and with that, I would turn to our host, my colleague from the House Agriculture Committee, Mr. Huelskamp, for any comments he might offer.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. TIM HUELSKAMP, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM KANSAS

Mr. Huelskamp. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased and honored to host this field hearing for the House Agriculture Committee, not far from my home town of Fowler and not far from our family farm. I appreciate you and Congressman Conaway and others that have taken the time and effort to hear what producers think about the farm bill, and what a fantastic place to be here and hear that, in the region once known as the Great American Desert.

The pioneers turned it into one of the most productive agriculture areas in the world with hundreds of thousands of acres of wheat and corn and milo and soybeans, even cotton, and millions of head of cattle and pigs, and not to mention ethanol and dairy production.

We do this in a time of mixed news: A lingering and devastating drought throughout much of the Plains, high commodity prices and record exports, matched with high cost for inputs and machinery and even a land price boom, an aging producer population and labor shortages, a slew of expensive government regulations from the EPA, USDA, Departments of Labor and Transportation.

Additionally, we're all aware of the financial situation in Washington. Overspending has led to a massive debt problem. As America's farmers and ranchers, we will do our fair share, I believe, to solve this problem, but so should the more than 80 percent of the farm bill spending for food stamps and other welfare programs, and we also expect Washington to do with less: Less regulation, less mandates, and less control over our way of life.

Writing farm policy is especially difficult because there are so many variables affecting agriculture: Market volatility, monetary policy, international competition, the weather, and of course, new regulations out of Washington. With these in mind, the next farm bill must be designed with maximum flexibility and effective risk management for our farmers and ranchers as we feed a growing and hungry world.

In order to meet these goals, it's absolutely critical that we actually listen and learn from the concerns and common sense of America's farmers and ranchers, so let me again thank you all for coming to share your thoughts with the Committee and I look forward to hearing from you today.

The Chairman. Thank you, Congressman Huelskamp.

The chair requests that other Members submit their opening statements for the record, so that witnesses may begin their testimony and ensure that there's ample time for questions.

With that, I'd like to welcome our first panel of witnesses to the table: Mr. Gary Harshberger, a corn, wheat, milo, soybean and cow/calf producer, Dodge City, Kansas; Mr. Keith Miller, a wheat, sorghum, corn, soybean and cow/calf producer, Great Bend, Kansas; Mr. Dee Vaughan, a corn, cotton, sorghum, soybean, and wheat producer, Dumas, Texas; Mr. Scott Neufeld, cotton--sorry--wheat, sorghum, canola, alfalfa, cow/calf producer from Fairview, Oklahoma; and indulge me for a moment, as the Chairman of the Committee, to note that while he didn't put it in his bio, he and his wife Brenda and their two kids were recently named the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Family of the Year. I think that's very impressive and thank you, Scott, for bringing the real boss of your operation, Brenda, with you today also.

With that, Mr. Terry Swanson. Mr. Swanson is a corn, wheat, sorghum, sunflower, and cow/calf producer from Walsh, Colorado, and with that, let's turn to, appropriately, our friend from Dodge City. You may begin.

STATEMENT OF GARY HARSHBERGER, CORN, WHEAT, MILO, SOYBEAN, AND COW/CALF PRODUCER, DODGE CITY, KS

Mr. Harshberger. Good morning. Is this on? Good morning, Chairman Lucas, Representative Huelskamp, and Representative Conaway. Welcome to western Kansas. Kansas's First Congressional District is the number one agriculture producing Congressional district in the nation. It's my honor to sit before you today and offer my perspective on farm policy as the Committee shapes the next farm bill. Thank you for holding this hearing in Kansas and thank all of you for being here.

My name is Gary Harshberger. I'm a fourth generation Ford County farmer. After graduating college in 1987, I returned to the family farm. However, I can proudly say that I started farming roughly about the age of 10. Today we raise corn, milo, wheat, soybeans, and some cattle. I currently serve as Chairman of the Kansas Water Authority. I serve on the Bonanza Bioenergy board as well as the Arkalon Energy board of directors.

I know that ag programs have done more than their fair share to reduce Federal spending and yet this bill will be written with much less money. Thank you for your efforts in trying to develop a farm package that works and can sustain farmers through the next 5 years. My testimony today will focus on five critical areas as they relate to my operation.

First of all, while this Committee does not have

jurisdiction over this particular area, I must share my concern with over-regulation. On one hand, the government wants to cut farm production--protection--cut farm protection, and on the other, it wants to saddle us with costly regulations proposed by out-of-touch politicians and bureaucrats. The child labor laws stemming from the Department of Labor, as well as diesel engine regulations coming from the EPA, are just two examples of regulatory burdens that cost my farm and consumers money.

Over-regulation is cumbersome and costly and presents more of a threat to our nation's agriculture than possibly would the farm bill.

On to the farm policy. I know this Committee has heard from producers across the U.S. that crop insurance is the most important program to protect in the next farm bill. I would like to echo that fact. The impact of the recent drought is a testament to the uncertainty farmers face each year, and the need to rely on crop insurance can never be more clear.

There are many ways to strengthen the program, such as a personal T-yield system to current APH methodology, allowing a producer's APH's to more accurately reflect his yield potential. I would like--I would also like to see a better system in place for insuring limited irrigation practices.

As water supplies diminish and water conservation practices are adopted, crop insurance should reflect this trend. RMA needs to be encouraged to implement the proposed limited irrigation crop insurance programs for 2013.

Finally, please keep crop insurance tools purchased by producers protected from environmental compliance requirements or other--any other payment limitations that limit conditions that do not belong tied to insurance.

There have been many policy avenues that have been offered by the commodity title. Shallow loss and deep loss have both been discussed. I believe a new program should protect yield and price in some form, as well as allow for flexibility. If revenue--if a revenue-type program is used, I believe a minimum price yield and plug--minimum price and plug yield should be included in a revenue-based program. My input prices have dramatically increased since the time I began farming. Recently, we have enjoyed higher commodity prices and positive profit margins. However, historically, this shows that this will not last, as input costs will increase until they meet or exceed the costs of production.

Last year, for instance, I just saw a \$48,000 increase in the price of a combine. I feel a price--I feel a minimum price will protect against a large drop in commodity prices and plug yields will help in times of consecutive years of yield loss, such as in a drought.

A farm bill should provide assistance when I suffer losses beyond my control. I need a simple program in case of--in case my operation suffers a disaster. ACRE and SURE did not provide the efficiency and simplicity farmers needed, and while current loan countercyclical programs are simple, production costs have continued to rise, making 2008 levels no longer relevant to the realities of costs today.

Water conservation is something I'm very passionate about. Last year's drought has dramatically affected the water supply in my region, as many others tied to the Ogallala Aquifer.

We need to build stronger incentives for producers to plant less water-intensive agriculture commodities; strengthen existing programs like AWEP, where dollars are already being used towards water conservation; and allow use of conservation practices that use new technologies currently eligible within the NRCS's conservation stewardship program, all of which can benefit groundwater conservation.

Last, I support the continuation of the farm bill energy title. It's imperative our country sustains the national--our national--our national security. Programs in the energy title, like the Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels, have been positive for the U.S. I am proud that I produce local grains that go to local ethanol plants and contribute to renewable fuel sources that reduce our dependence on foreign oil and putting billions of dollars back into our local economies instead of sending them overseas.

Many people talk today about cutting the energy title from the farm bill, and some even question the Renewable Fuel Standard in general. We have to remember that energy policy has been instrumental in maintaining our markets for our grain, as input prices and regulations have continued to increase tremendously. Cutting the legs out from underneath ethanol or biofuels at this time would be catastrophic.

In closing, I'd like to reiterate that crop insurance is critical. I believe that the commodity title should be as simple as possible, as to allow producers flexibility for what works best in their region and on their farm. Finally, water and biofuels are critical to our local economies, and programs in the conservation and energy titles that benefit us in producing domestic biofuels and sustaining our water should be supported.

Thank you, and I welcome any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Harshberger follows:]

Prepared Statement of Gary Harshberger, Corn, Wheat, Milo, Soybean, and Cow/Calf Producer, Dodge City, KS

Introduction

It is my honor to sit here today before the House Committee on Agriculture and offer my perspective on farm policy as the Committee shapes the next farm bill. Thank you for holding this hearing in Kansas, and thank you Chairman Lucas and Congressman Huelskamp for being here.

My name is Gary Harshberger. After college, I returned home to my family operation in Ford County and started farming in 1988 where we grow corn, milo, wheat and soybeans, and we also raise cattle. I serve as Chairman of the Kansas Water Authority and serve on the Bonanza Bioenergy and Arkalon Energy board of directors. Water and renewable energy can offer a sustainable future and are two areas I am particularly passionate about.

I know that ag programs have done more than their fair share to reduce Federal spending and yet this bill will be written with much less money. Thank you for your efforts in trying to develop a farm bill package that works and can sustain farmers through the next 5 years. My testimony will focus on five critical areas as they relate to my operation.

Cumbersome Regulations

Over-regulation has become a significant threat to the family farm. Although I understand this Committee does not have jurisdiction over this particular area, it is necessary that I share my discontent with what is happening at the farm level today. A couple of examples to highlight my concern are the Department of Labor's proposed child labor laws as they relate to agriculture and the diesel engine regulations coming through the Environmental Protection Agency. If the U.S. hopes to stay competitive with the rest of the world, it cannot continue to add more regulatory burdens on family farms like mine. These cost my farm and consumers money and disrupt the family farm work ethic on which this country was founded.

Federal Crop Insurance

Even though producers across the U.S. have echoed Federal Crop Insurance as the most important program to protect in the next farm bill, I must place emphasis on it myself because it is crucially vital to my farming operation. The impact from the recent drought is a testament to the unknown certainty producers' face each growing year, and many are able to continue farming this year because of their investment in crop insurance.

Improvements are needed in APH methodology and the county T-yield system. A producer's insurable yield should reflect what he and his lender actually expect to produce in a given year. APH could be improved by using a personal T-yield system, which would allow a producer's APH to more accurately reflect his yield potential rather than the county's yield potential.

I would like to see a better system in crop insurance for limited irrigation. Right now insurance is all or nothing. There needs to be a viable policy in Federal crop insurance to have limited type irrigation practices. There has been talk about this at the state level, but nothing has been developed yet. This type of policy would allow producers to raise feed while using less water.

Please keep crop insurance tools purchased by the producer protected from environmental compliance requirements or other payment limit conditions that do not belong tied to insurance.

Commodity Title

Many avenues have been offered for a commodity title in the next farm bill, and while proposals have focused on either a shallow loss type program or a deep loss type program, I hope that our new program protects yields and price in some form. I have not looked at how all these different options would impact my farming operation, but I did like the concept of being able to choose between policies, an opportunity that I understand was in the fall draft of the farm bill.

If a revenue type program is used, I believe a minimum price and

plug yields should be included in a revenue-based program. My input prices have dramatically increased since the time I began farming, and while we have enjoyed higher commodity prices, history shows they will not last. In order to protect my investment, I feel a minimum price will protect against a large commodity price drop and plug yields will help in times of consecutive years of yield loss, which I may soon face if the current drought continues.

Without yield plugs, a scenario may be created where the program has little value to dryland in this area and can no longer offer protection to my farm if two consecutive years of yield loss are realized. Therefore, I feel this component is necessary in a revenue-based program.

A farm bill should provide assistance when producers suffer losses beyond their control. I need a simple program to take to my banker in case my operation suffers a disaster. ACRE is based on the state's income, and I could suffer a total loss due to an isolated weather event and never trigger a payment. The SURE program was very complicated and slow to pay when we did have a loss. The current loan and countercyclical programs are simple, but production costs have continued to rise making the 2008 price levels no longer relevant to the realities of costs today.

A set minimum price is needed to protect producer income in the event of a multi-year low price situation. Ideally, this minimum could move upward over time should production costs also increase.

Conservation Title

Last year's drought has dramatically affected the water supply in my region and many others tied to the Ogallala Aquifer south of here. As an irrigated farmer, water is something I am very passionate about. Every drop of water is valuable and should be utilized toward its best economic return, but when meters are over pumped and very little recharge to the aquifer through rainfall takes place, lasting damage to our water supply results.

Programs in the 2008 Farm Bill like the Agriculture Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) targeted dollars toward water conservation and have laid the groundwork for more focused programs, but I feel these programs stand to be strengthened by providing stronger incentives to producers to plant less water-intensive agricultural commodities. The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is another existing program where water-savings language can be applied.

Energy Title

I support the continuation of a farm bill energy title. It is imperative our country sustains our national security, and produces as much of our fuel in the U.S. as possible. I am a believer in the "all of the above approach." The energy title has helped to continue to expand biofuels production outside the Corn Belt and outside of traditional feedstocks. Programs in the energy title like the Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels have been positive for the U.S. I am proud that I produce local grain that goes into local ethanol plants and contributes to a renewable fuel source that will lessen dependence on foreign oil.

Many people talk today about cutting the energy title of the farm bill, and some even question the renewable fuels standard in general. We have to remember that energy policy has been very valuable in helping to maintain markets for our grain as input prices and regulations have continued to increase tremendously.

Conclusion

In closing I would like to reiterate that crop insurance is critical. I believe that the commodity title should be as simple as possible and bankable. If there ends up being several different complex proposals, then I would hope that I have the flexibility to choose based upon my own operation. Finally, water and biofuels are critical to our local economies, and programs in the conservation and energy titles that benefit us while producing domestic biofuels and sustaining our water should be supported. Thank you.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Miller, you may begin when you're ready.

STATEMENT OF KEITH MILLER, WHEAT, SORGHUM, CORN, SOYBEAN, AND COW/CALF PRODUCER, GREAT BEND, KS

Mr. Miller. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and the Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to join us today and share some thoughts about the necessity of an economic safety net for farmers and how possible improvements to the current program would allow us to achieve these goals.

I currently farm in the middle of Kansas, Great Bend, Kansas, and serve on the board of directors of Kansas Farm Bureau and am the past Chairman of the United States Meat

Export Federation, but I'm here today under my own steam and grateful for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you.

Mr. Chairman, please allow me to thank you publicly for having Representative Huelskamp host this hearing here in the great city of Dodge City, and we're glad that he did that for us, so we appreciate that, Tim.

Crop insurance is an important part of my operation and it is imperative to it. Protection enhancement of crop insurance programs ranks as the number one priority from a long list of farm organizations throughout the United States, and I cannot agree more. Agriculture is a highly erratic industry and is influenced by many variables, and some are beyond a producer's control. We can control seed, fertilizer, and those types of inputs, but we cannot control the weather and the markets. Simply put, during the development of the 2012 Farm Bill, crop insurance must be a priority.

Enterprise units would allow farmers to access quality coverage at a lower rate. These units are being used in certain areas to--and we're having trouble with the irrigated and the dryland differential because it currently, if you insure under one, you have to be for both. We need more flexibility in that program.

Limited irrigation should be a focus of the new program and we should look for ways that we can do that in the new farm bill. Limited irrigation will only help conserve the water supply which is so very limited here in the United States.

Declining yields is another problem that we're having with our crop insurance, and it's because of the excessive amount of drought years and crop failures. Under the current situation, the production history will go down and it will increase costs to our consumers through their premiums. We need to find a better way of keeping the crop in that system.

Improving data collection: Like many others, the data is very, very important in the technology on my farm. It only seems right that we should improve the data collection that FSA and RMA are using, especially tying crop insurance together with our other reporting services, so we would encourage you to work on that.

Reform: as you know, the cuts in crop insurance for the last few years have been between \$12 and \$20 billion. Additional cuts would likely increase the premiums to our producers and make it unable for a lot of producers to be able to purchase that. We simply cannot afford additional cuts in today's high risk marketplace.

Let me switch gears, Conservation: I live right next to the Cheyenne Bottoms and conservation is a very, very important part of my operation. I currently use EQIP in several different ways to try and limit the amount of erosion in our area and preserve that wetland.

Regulation, as you know, has been a major part of our problem coming from the--from D.C. The CAFO regulations, EPA regulations, Clean Water Act, all them have been giving us a lot more new regulations coming down and we're having trouble meeting all those regulations, and we sure would encourage you to try and limit them.

Exports: I couldn't tell you enough about exports and global economy and how the amount of opportunities we have there. The Market Access Program is crucial for that to stay in business. The multi-year impact of increased market development spending is equal to \$35 in agriculture export gains for every dollar expended. That's a 35:1 return on investment. That is crucial for the future of the United States to keep that program intact.

So in closing, I would encourage you to read my entire written testimony, because there are a lot more facts and figures that are in that, and I sure thank you for the opportunity for me to be able to share my thoughts with you as a Committee.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Miller follows:]

Prepared Statement of Keith Miller, Wheat, Sorghum, Corn, Soybean, and Cow/Calf Producer, Great Bend, KS

Mister Chairman, Ranking Member Peterson, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to join you today to share some thoughts about the necessity of an economic safety net for farmers and how some possible improvements to the current program will allow us to achieve this goal.

I'm a third generation farmer who grew up on the same farm where I currently live in rural Barton County, Kansas. When I started farming with my wife in 1976, my father was farming 400 acres and raised a few

hogs. Since then, the farm has grown to over 7,500 acres and is a diversified grains, alfalfa and cattle operation.

All of my daughters and sons-in-law work on the farm at various times, and my daughter, Dara, and her husband, Jason, work there full time throughout the year. Whenever I'm away from the farm, I can count on my family to ensure that things run smoothly with respect to the day-to-day business on our farm.

I've been fortunate to have the opportunity to serve in a host of leadership capacities, in my community, my county, my state, and even internationally.

Our family is deeply involved in our church, where I serve on the church council and I've had the good fortune to serve on my local school board for a number of years, including a stint as President, when we shepherded a major bond issue to pay for school improvements.

I currently serve on the board of directors of Kansas Farm Bureau, and am a past Chairman of the United States Meat Export Federation.

But I'm here today under my own steam, grateful for the opportunity to share my thoughts about the next farm bill and eager to engage the Committee in this important dialogue.

Mister Chairman, please allow me to begin by publicly thanking my own Congressman, U.S. Representative Tim Huelskamp for his leadership in the Big First U.S. House District of Kansas, and for arranging this field hearing today in Dodge City.

Safety Net/Crop Insurance

Our family is deeply committed to agriculture and to rural America. My wife, Connie, and I raised our daughters and run our farm with an eye to the future generations of our family who will help feed, fuel and clothe the world from our lands.

Stability through the use of effective risk management tools is imperative for our operation. Protection and enhancement of crop insurance programs ranks as the number one priority for a long list of farm organizations in the 2012 Farm Bill process. I could not agree more.

Agriculture is a highly erratic industry influenced by a multitude of variables beyond the producer's control. Farmers can use top quality seed, fertilizer, chemicals and best management practices, and still not be able to control the weather or the markets. Profit margins in the industry are such that it is critical that farmers have access to a strong, viable and flexible risk management program.

Simply put, during the development of the 2012 Farm Bill, crop insurance must be a priority.

In fact, there are several possible improvements that I would urge the Committee to consider that would allow the program to better meet the needs of producers in Kansas and across the nation.

Enterprise Units

Enterprise units allow farmers to access quality coverage at a lower premium rate. The program should be made permanent, but unfortunately, given the diversity between irrigated and dryland acres, the concept doesn't work as well as it could. To address this situation I would recommend introducing additional flexibility within the program to allow producers to designate enterprise units by practice; specifically, differentiating between irrigated acres and dryland acres.

In drought years, this differentiation would have allowed us to receive indemnity payments on the dryland acres while continuing to attempt to bring a crop to fruition on our irrigated acres.

Limited Irrigation Products

Given our focus on the future we routinely look for ways to maximize production while conserving water. One option I would encourage the Committee to support is the concept of a limited irrigation insurance product. Currently, producers have only two choices: They must declare acres either irrigated or non-irrigated. An irrigated designation implies application of adequate water to produce the crop but also requires planting at higher population rates.

Properly developed, a limited irrigation product would encourage conservation by allowing producers with limited or declining water supplies to plant lower populations and set a lower yield goal while maintaining insurance coverage at better than dryland levels.

Declining Yields

Many parts of the nation have now endured successive years of disaster events. Under our current structure these consecutive bad years result in declining Actual Production History and subsequently increasing producer premiums.

Alternatives should be explored to rectify this situation and could include the use of a personal 'T' yield in addition to the adoption of a higher yield plug to allow a producer's insurable yield to reflect what he hopes to produce in a given year.

Improving Data Collection

Like many operations, we have aggressively implemented technology on our farm. It seems only natural to continue to encourage the

implementation of technology at FSA and RMA as well as on the farm allowing greatly improved accuracy in reporting and eventually adding the potential for real time data collection.

We believe the 2012 Farm Bill should continue to encourage agencies to embrace technology to better serve producers and allow for more efficient delivery of all farm programs and indemnity payments.

Reform Wisely

As you're well aware, recent cuts to crop insurance and the renegotiation of the SRA have resulted in \$12 to \$20 billion in savings. Additional cuts will likely result in increased premiums to producers or reductions in the products available or the level of service companies are able to provide. We simply cannot afford additional cuts in today's high risk marketplace.

American agriculture relies on a strong safety net, delivered efficiently and effectively through the current public-private partnership. Producers across the nation are concerned and opposed to this notion that crop insurance delivery could be managed and delivered through an existing Federal agency.

In addition, in no case should the crop insurance tools, which are purchased by the producer, be encumbered with environmental regulation, conservation requirements, or other conditions that fall out of the scope of insurance. They should also not be subject to payment limits or means testing, doing so would defeat the purpose of the programs and reduce their effectiveness in ensuring that producers, no matter how small or large have equal access to risk management tools and an equal opportunity to continue to operate their farms.

Conservation

Let me switch gears and visit briefly about the importance of conservation. My farm is literally just a stone's throw from Cheyenne Bottoms. It's the largest marsh in the interior of the United States and was designated a Wetland of International Importance in 1988.

The area is considered the most important shorebird migration point in the western hemisphere. Approximately 45% of the North American shorebird population stops at the Bottoms during spring migration. Because of our farm's proximity to this special place, those of us in Barton County understand and value the importance of conservation.

Farm bill conservation programs help producers enhance soil and water quality, improve wildlife habitat, can assist with compliance with Federal and state environmental rules, protect agricultural and grass lands and provide various other benefits.

Working lands programs, in my opinion, provide the most bang for the buck. Chief among those is the Environmental Quality Incentives Program which seems to be the best and most effective way to implement multiple conservation practices. Whatever you can do to preserve EQIP funding and programs should be a top priority.

On my farm, I take advantage of the benefits offered in EQIP three different ways: Terracing of my fields, waterways and water conservation. In addition, I have many acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program.

Regulation

Federal regulations are increasingly costly for the U.S. economy, including for farmers and ranchers. And here, if you'll allow me, I'd like to tip my hat to Congressman Huelskamp for his work keeping this issue in the consciousness of the Congress.

In the last year alone, Federal regulators have finalized regulations that ask farmers to draw up oil spill prevention plans for their operations, apply for Clean Water Act permits for certain pesticide applications and report certain air emissions. Unless the courts rule otherwise, farms and ranches will likely be regulated for greenhouse gas emissions, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing that Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) owners report sensitive information on their operations to Federal regulators. Given the wide application, cost and burden of Federal regulations, it is critical that the process by which they are proposed and finalized be open, transparent and fair to all, particularly the regulated community.

Research

As you know, the world population is exploding. In any best case estimate, agricultural production must produce 70 to 100% more by 2050. Current efforts are likely to yield only a 40% increase in our production by that time. We have significant work to do.

Federal programs must encourage both public and private investment in efforts that will produce new information to improve soil, environmental and socioeconomic conditions and allow producers to continue to produce high quality, affordable food on a shrinking land base.

We must also strive to improve the acceptance and implementation of technology in agriculture. Our competitive advantage in world markets will be maintained only through the continued support and encouragement of technological advancements. To that end, our partners in the biotech

industry should be encouraged to cooperatively develop protocols for products as they come off patent to allow producers to access and implement cost effective practices on their operations.

Exports

I think we can all agree that in today's global economy, our government needs to be a full-fledged partner in helping expand and enhance agricultural export opportunities. The Market Access Program of the existing farm bill works and should be retained.

Agriculture's trade surplus was nearly \$30 billion 2 years ago. It's forecast to be \$24.5 billion this year. Agriculture is still one of the few sectors of the American economy to enjoy a trade surplus, and without it, the overall U.S. trade deficit would be even worse.

The multi-year impact of the increased market development spending is equal to \$35 in agricultural export gains for every additional \$1 expended. That's a 35:1 return on investment.

The Market Access Program protects American jobs and increases farm income. Every billion dollars in U.S. farm exports supports about 8,400 American jobs. Given that U.S. farm exports are forecast to be \$131 billion this year, more than a million Americans can trace their jobs to these exports, thanks in no small measure to MAP and related programs that have boosted U.S. agricultural exports.

And finally, the Market Access Program is a great example of a successful public-private partnership. It is administered on a reimbursable cost-share basis, specifically targeting small businesses and farmer co-operatives. While government's an important partner in his effort, industry contributions are now pegged at more than 60% of total annual spending on market development and promotion, up from roughly 30% only 2 decades ago.

Conclusion

I manage my farm with a focus on longevity and sustainability. We appreciate the partnership we have with the Federal Government and programs to ensure stability in our efforts to produce food, fiber and fuel. The 2012 Farm Bill provides new opportunities to further define that partnership and to continue to protect and ensure that Americans and consumers around the world have access to safe and affordable food.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts and our operation with you today. Should you ever find yourself in Barton County, Kansas, please, by all means, stop by for a cup of coffee.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Vaughan, you may begin when you're ready.

STATEMENT OF DEE VAUGHAN, CORN, COTTON, SORGHUM, SOYBEAN, AND WHEAT PRODUCER, DUMAS, TX

Mr. Vaughan. Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing here today. My name is Dee Vaughan and I am a corn, cotton, sorghum, soybean and wheat producer from Dumas, Texas. I currently serve as President of the Southwest Council of Agribusiness, an organization comprised of 17 farm groups, 30 lending institutions, and about 70 main street businesses in Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Colorado, and also here in Kansas.

I want to begin by thanking this Committee for working hard to develop a consensus farm bill this last fall that not only would have met the needs of all producers and all regions and all crops, but have done so in a way that would have saved over \$23 billion for the taxpayers. I believe this year's farm bill process should build upon the excellent work that was done last fall.

There is one particular aspect of your work that I want to especially thank you for, and that is your focus on price protection. If Washington is truly serious about saving taxpayer dollars and less government intervention, price-based protection in the farm bill is the way to go about it.

Think about a farm bill that provides meaningful price protection relative to today's production costs and price situation that could still end up not costing the taxpayer a dime for this protection over the next 5 years.

Conversely, if history is any guide, you can be sure that a farm bill built on price protection, if needed, will prove to be the cheapest of the alternatives that have been presented before you. In short, a price-based farm bill policy that only kicks in when it is absolutely necessary is the conservative, fiscally responsible, and market-oriented approach that we should be striving to achieve.

It seems that much of the farm bill discussion has centered on revenue-based options, but there are concerns about this route. First, I think there has been enough bad PR about direct payments over the last few years that producers want to avoid

receiving any kind of a payment unless it is absolutely necessary. I also think there is concern about the fact that no policy should be so rich that it drives up input costs and land costs, not to mention the criticism.

Second, I think there is a big concern that revenue approaches cut off help to producers just when they need it the very most, when revenue really drops, mainly due to prolonged periods of low prices. That's exactly when producers need farm policy most, and that's exactly when revenue approaches offer the least protection.

Third, while I agree that revenue does not exactly duplicate what crop insurance does, there is at least some crossover, especially in the minds of the public and especially in the minds of the critics of the farm bill and crop insurance. It is important to remember in this exercise that we must pass a good farm bill, but we must also be able to defend it later.

In my view, what was so important about what you did last fall is that you ensured that even if a producer chose a revenue option, there would be price protection for that producer if the bottom fell out, price-wise. You also worked to protect crop insurance from harm, which is a top priority as applied by farmers from across the country, and I totally agree. Whatever you do, please do not harm crop insurance. Proposals to link conservation compliance and to impose a payment limit cap on crop insurance are thinly veiled attempts to kill insurance for farmers. No question about it.

From my perspective, at least, the Supplemental Coverage Option included in your plan of last fall could serve very well as the revenue component of the farm bill and do so without the negatives that I've mentioned about the revenue options.

In closing, I firmly believe that if you ask rank and file farmers, no matter the crop, no matter the region of the country, the vast majority of them would tell you that if they were writing the farm bill, they would ensure that there is real price protection and that crop insurance would not be harmed in the process, but improved.

Maybe it's the West Texan in me, but I tend to think that the right answer is usually the plain one. Washington should keep it simple. We rely on crop insurance for what it does best: Protect against production risk. We need an equally effective policy that provides protection against low prices over a sustained period of time such as we experienced in the late 1990's and early 2000's. While shallow losses can be devastating if they're repetitive, the risk producers fear most is a drop in commodity prices to below cost of production that lasts for several years.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views on the 2012 Farm Bill and I look forward to answering any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Vaughan follows:]

Prepared Statement of Dee Vaughan, Corn, Cotton, Sorghum, Soybean, and Wheat Producer, Dumas, TX

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Peterson, Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing, and the important work you are doing to craft a good farm bill.

My name is Dee Vaughan and I farm just about 200 miles southwest of here near the town of Dumas, Texas. I grow all the major row crops that work well in the Texas Panhandle--chiefly corn, cotton, sorghum, wheat and soybeans. I have been fortunate in the past number of years to get to serve in a number of leadership positions in farm and commodity organizations--including serving as President of the National Corn Growers Association from 2003 to 2004.

I currently serve as President of the Southwest Council of Agribusiness, an organization comprised of 17 farm groups, including producers of cotton, corn, wheat, grain sorghum, rice, peanuts and cattle; 30 lending institutions; and about 70 main street businesses in Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Colorado, and here in Kansas.

I want to begin by thanking this Committee--earnestly thanking you--for working so hard to develop a consensus farm bill last fall that not only would have met the needs of all producers, regions, and crops in this country but would have done so in a way that would have saved taxpayers \$23 billion. I believe we as farmers can all be proud of the fact that our rural representatives and agricultural leaders in Washington were able to come together in this way--a real contrast to how it appears other areas are working (or not working) in our nation's government. In short, I believe this year's farm bill process should build upon the excellent work that you did last year.

There is one particular aspect of your work that I want to especially thank you for and encourage you in, and that is your focus

on price protection. Plain and simple, a collapse in commodity prices is what keeps me up at night, and that is the risk I think this farm bill should address. Happily, this approach is also the most cost efficient. If Washington is truly serious about saving taxpayer dollars and about less government intervention, price-based protection in a farm bill, as a compliment to crop insurance, is the way to do it.

Think about the prospect of a farm bill that provides meaningful price protection relative to today's production costs and price situation that could still end up not costing taxpayers a dime over the next 5 years. If the only thing title I of the next farm bill provided producers was this kind of price protection, this no cost scenario is a real possibility. Conversely, if a price-based farm policy did cost money, if history is any guide, you can be sure that it will prove to be the cheapest of all the alternatives.

Easy to understand, bankable price protection is not a unique concept to me or anyone else and it certainly is not an unproven one. But it does feel a bit novel amidst all the other complicated proposals that are floating around out there which I'd be surprised if more than a handful of people could actually explain to you if asked. But worse than being complicated, these ideas--which all center on a revenue guarantee based in part on a 5 year Olympic Average (OA) price--offer farmers no real price protection and we know from experience that that alone is a big problem.

The SWCA, which is made up of the major producer organizations from five states as well as dozens of lenders, suppliers and processors, has made price protection a key priority. This organization is unique in that it brings a lot of diversity and experience to the table via the leaders from these regional organizations, many of whom have served as officers in national commodity organizations. This past Fall, our group propounded a priorities document which is attached to this testimony in its entirety. With respect to the price protection, it stated the following:

``The priority in redesigning a countercyclical policy should be to protect against deep and persistent price declines. Whether achieved through a countercyclical revenue policy or a price-based policy, the policy must provide effective protection across commodities, and be reliable and bankable to the producer. The marketing loan for commodities should also be maintained and rates raised where practicable in order to reflect today's costs of production."

Of the systemic risks (those beyond the control of the farmer) which farmers face, prolonged periods of low prices would be most devastating to the economy and is most worrisome to SWCA members--producers, lenders and agribusinesses alike. Production losses are being addressed well by crop insurance. Single year revenue losses are being addressed well by crop insurance. But if a series of events like a strengthened dollar, above average yield worldwide, and a slowdown of Asian economies struck, causing corn and sorghum prices to decline to \$3.00, beans to \$7.00, wheat to \$4.00, rice to \$11.00 and cotton to \$.65, our current farm policy would be ineffective and rural economies would suffer.

The SWCA does not, and I do not believe a 5 year Olympic Average of price or revenue as a target provides adequate protection in this situation either.

A 5 year rolling average price-trigger can offer assurance in the first and second year of a price decline, but by the third year the protection is severely eroded. And, of course, our experience from 1997 to 2006 would confirm that prices can remain below cost of production for multiple years.

The current debate reminds me of the 1995/1996 timeframe when economists assured us all that we had hit a new plateau of prices and that growing world demand for food and fiber would keep prices high.

In 1995, the season average price for corn hit \$3.24--an all time high. But over the next 4 years, prices fell to \$2.71 in 1996; to \$2.43 in 1997; to \$1.94 in 1998; and to \$1.82 in 1999--that is a 44% collapse in prices over 4 years that was absolutely devastating, and that I expect most of us up here today would not have survived had it not been for the ad hoc Market Loss Payments that was provided beginning in 1998.

How would have a 5 year Olympic Average price safety net have fared during these times? Well it would have peaked in 1998 at \$2.55, but then trailed off over the next 4 years to \$2.07 in 2001, and then \$1.92 in 2002 and 2003. That is not what I, or my banker, would have considered adequate price protection.

In 2010, the season average price for corn hit \$5.40--a new all time high. But what if we shed 44% over the next 4 years just as we did in the late 1990's? How will farmers fare with corn prices at \$3.02. I can tell you for this farmer and the community of Dumas, Texas, the

answer would be not well.

The current 5 year Olympic Average for corn relevant to 2012 is \$4.55, which sounds like an attractive safety net. But if that safety net is allowed to trail down over a couple years back to the mid \$3.00 range or lower, then it is no longer helpful, and I expect farmers would be seeking ad hoc assistance again.

Now I can tell you I am thrilled prices are still strong in the 2011 marketing year and 2012 planting season, and I am hopeful they remain this way--but I am not confident they will. So bottom line, I think building in more relevant protection while prices are high is good insurance should prices go south again, as history has shown they most likely will.

If one defines conservatism, fiscal responsibility, and market orientation by the traditional measures of how much something costs and how often it intervenes, price-based farm policy that only kicks in when it is absolutely necessary is the conservative, fiscally responsible, and market-oriented approach.

Regarding revenue program alternatives, specifically those targeted at "shallow losses," I would note just a few concerns. First, I think there has been enough bad PR from Direct Payments that producers want to avoid receiving any payment unless it is absolutely necessary. I also think there is concern that no policy should be too rich so that it drives up input costs and land rents, in addition to the criticism. Second, I think there is a big concern that revenue approaches cut off help to producers just when they need it most: when revenue really drops, mainly due to a prolonged period of low prices. That's exactly when farmers need farm policy most and that's exactly when revenue approaches fold-up tent. Third, while I agree that revenue does not exactly duplicate what crop insurance does, there is at least some crossover and, in the minds of the public and especially the critics, any effort to say there is no duplication between the two will be regarded, however falsely, as merely parsing words. It is important to remember in this exercise that we must not just pass a farm bill but we must also one day defend it as well.

In my view, what was so important about what you did last fall is that you ensured that even if a producer chose a revenue approach, there would be price protection for that producer if the bottom ever fell out. You also worked to protect crop insurance from harm, something that so many farmers across the country say is there absolute top priority.

I want to add my voice to the chorus and say, whatever you do, please do nothing to harm crop insurance. Proposals to link conservation compliance and to impose a pay limit on crop insurance are thinly veiled attempts to kill insurance for farmers. Period.

From my perspective, at least, the Supplemental Coverage Option included in your plan of last fall could serve very well as the revenue component of the farm bill and could do so without any of the negatives of the other revenue approaches that I just laid out.

In closing, let me just say this: I firmly believe that if you asked rank and file farmers in the country, no matter what the crop or region of the country, nine out of ten of them would tell you that if they were writing the farm bill, they would ensure that there is real price protection because that is the one thing crop insurance is not designed to take care of, and that crop insurance should be not just not harmed, but improved upon.

It may be the West Texan in me but I tend to think that the right answer is usually the plain one. Washington should keep it simple. We rely on crop insurance for what it does best, protect against production and in-season price risk. We need an equally effective policy that provides protection against low prices over a sustained period of time such as was experienced in the late 1990's through the mid-2000's. While shallow losses can be devastating if they are repetitive, the risk that producers fear most is a drop in commodity prices to below cost of production lasting for several years.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views on the 2012 Farm Bill. I will be pleased to answer any follow-up questions you may have.

Attachment

October 12, 2011

Dear Member of Congress:

The Southwest Council of Agribusiness (SWCA) is a coalition of more than 100 businesses standing with producer organizations from Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas and Colorado to promote agriculture and policies that support this most important and fundamental of industries.

Understanding that our nation's current fiscal situation, and the super committee process designed to address it, may force an early reconsideration of the policies of the 2008 Farm Bill, the SWCA offers the following for your consideration.

Budget Issues

The members of the SWCA believe that farm policy designed to support a strong and dynamic U.S. agriculture sector is vital to our nation's economy and security interests. We also believe the current mix of policies has proven a great success by reducing government expenditures while providing a foundation for our nation's farmers to diversify and create and grow markets, commerce, and jobs to emerge as one of the few bright spots in the current dismal economy.

Accordingly, as Congress considers any revisions to these important policies, we would ask that you carefully consider three important overarching facts along with our specific recommendations:

First, stable agricultural policy makes for a strong agricultural economy. In 2000, a time of great instability and uncertainty, the U.S. value of farm sector production had stagnated at \$218.4 billion with little optimism for a recovery. However, since the 2000 crop insurance bill, the 2002 Farm Bill, and subsequent improvements, farm sector production value and other measures have shown steady growth, reaching a net record \$411.5 billion in 2011. Total net value added to the economy from agriculture is also forecast to reach a new high of \$157 billion in 2011. As Washington seeks to provide greater economic certainty through reform of the tax code, regulatory relief, and other measures in order to fix all that is broken in the economy, injecting uncertainty in the one sector of the economy that is not broken seems especially imprudent.

Second, stable agricultural policy costs taxpayers less. From 1999 to 2001, the government spent an average of \$22.4 billion to shore up the floundering agricultural sector, which had been injured by, among other things, lost trade, a strong dollar and strong worldwide crop production. Over the last decade, this has changed. For example, from 2009 to 2011, annual spending will average \$11.6 billion--roughly $\frac{1}{2}$ of the amount being spent 10 years earlier. When markets turn again, it will be more cost effective to have stable and predictable policy in place to address the losses rather than work on an ad hoc basis to provide costly disaster assistance.

Third, our growing world needs a strong and dynamic U.S. agricultural sector. The global population is expected to rise from seven billion to nine billion people by 2050, and so we must become more productive on the world's limited arable land. U.S. agriculture today leads the way in this regard, getting more out of every acre of soil than any other nation, and doing so in a sustainable way. We must not abandon this model.

Because of these critical facts, we strongly oppose cutting the agricultural budget beyond the level that would otherwise be cut under sequestration, which essentially mirrors the level of cuts recommended by the bipartisan Simpson-Bowles Commission. Agriculture has consistently come in under budget over the past decade, and has made significant contributions to deficit reduction both in its mandatory policies (e.g., the 2008 Farm Bill and the 2010 crop insurance negotiation) and in discretionary funding accounts. We also strongly believe that the policies to achieve these savings should be developed by the House and Senate Agriculture Committees.

While the SWCA considers all areas of the farm bill important, and specifically supports areas such as research funding and the FSA guaranteed loan programs, we are focusing our comments on the principal funding areas most likely to be affected should the super committee process address farm policy.

Federal Crop Insurance and Title I Farm Policy

Since our nation's very beginning, we have had Federal policies in place to promote strong U.S. agricultural production. These policies have helped the U.S. agricultural sector become the most productive, dynamic, conservation-minded and diverse agricultural sector in the history of the world. Below are some specific policy recommendations we provide to ensure we do not break with this important tradition that is also a cornerstone of our economy and security.

1. Any countercyclical element of farm policy that would replace the current countercyclical program, direct payments, SURE, and ACRE, in whole or in part, must effectively work for all staple commodities and producers. The policy should provide reliable protection by commodity, but should be carefully designed to not distort planting decisions.
2. Any cuts made to title I of the farm bill should be applied to the respective commodities on a proportional basis.

3. The priority in redesigning a countercyclical policy should be to protect against deep and persistent price declines. Whether achieved through a countercyclical revenue policy or a price-based policy, the policy must provide effective protection across commodities, and be reliable and bankable to the producer. The marketing loan for commodities should also be maintained and rates raised where practicable in order to reflect today's costs of production.
4. The separate countercyclical mechanism should compliment, not compete with or duplicate, the protection that can be purchased through Federal crop insurance. Moreover, crop insurance should be improved, especially as it relates to insurable yields (i.e., the Actual Production History system) and specific crops such as rice and peanuts that are currently under-served. Rep. Randy Neugebauer's "Total Coverage Option" area-based supplemental insurance authority is a well-crafted and cost effective option for shallow loss coverage.
5. Given declining budgetary resources, assistance should generally be tailored to planted acres. However, we are concerned about base acres, particularly in the western Great Plains, that are currently in grass and receiving decoupled benefits. Because of their conserving use, we would urge the consideration of alternative positive incentives to keep this land in grass where the economic benefits of breaking it out would be outweighed by the potentially adverse environmental impact.
6. Finally, outdated payment limits and arbitrary means tests should be eliminated, and USDA's definition of a "farm" should be updated. Notions of 2.1 million farmers in the U.S. (based on USDA's definition which includes anyone who sells more than \$1,000 worth of agricultural production) lead to the distortion of facts. Based on 2007 Census data, only 10% of farms in the U.S. had gross sales over \$250,000, and only 125,000 had gross sales over \$500,000. These full-time family farms are all-in every year and constitute the "thin green line" that keeps America and much of the world clothed and fed.

Title II Conservation Issues

In the Southwest region of the U.S., conservation policies have provided important tools for farmers, ranchers, livestock producers, and landowners to make sound investments that promote wise use of soil and water resources. We are especially mindful this year of this fact considering the severe drought that has gripped the region. With this background, we offer the following principles:

1. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) should be preserved. While we are open to reduction in the overall acreage cap, we maintain that this policy has served as an effective means of concentrating our farming efforts on the most productive land. The Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP) should be expanded, especially if decoupled title I policies are substituted for policies tied to planted acres.
2. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is the most important conservation policy, providing critical cost-share and incentives for farmers and livestock-producers alike. The EQIP model should be expanded, and funding for the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) within it should be maintained and better directed to encourage the best water conserving practices in agriculture operations possible.
3. Given the critical water needs of a growing world population, a greater emphasis should be placed upon water conservation in all policies within the conservation title. The Southwest U.S. has much it can teach the world about a wise use of scarce water resources in agricultural production, but we feel confident more can and should be done.

Regulatory and Competitiveness Issues

Agriculture is a business subject to sharp and unpredictable swings in price, costs, and income, with producers operating on thin margins, which generally, helps to explain the need for the farm and conservation policies discussed above. This also explains why U.S. farmers and ranchers are sensitive to regulations imposed by the government. The imposition or threat of misguided environmental regulations, including a rash of recent endangered species listings, and the proliferation of manipulative regulations in the livestock sector have all had a dampening effect on the rural economy, with no apparent benefit. Accordingly, the SWCA is very supportive of efforts

by Senator Mike Johanns and Senator Pat Roberts to sequester the regulatory activity and provide stability to the business environment. We offer one specific proposal that is fully within the purview of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees:

The USDA Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) proposed rule should not be implemented because it will encourage frivolous lawsuits and end alternative marketing arrangements as we know them. Ultimately the proposed rule will set the beef industry back 30 years by stifling the innovative efforts of U.S. cattle producers to add value and enhance the quality and safety of their products. The bottom line is that this is yet another example of the government trying to interfere in the private market by telling producers when and how they can market their cattle.

We hope that this information is useful as you continue to work to develop sound farm policy in the context of ongoing deficit reduction efforts. If you would like to know more about the SWCA and our membership, please visit <http://www.southwest-council.com>.

Sincerely,

Southwest Council of Agribusiness.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Scott, you may begin when you're ready.

STATEMENT OF SCOTT NEUFELD, WHEAT, SORGHUM, CANOLA, ALFALFA,
AND COW/CALF PRODUCER, FAIRVIEW, OK

Mr. Neufeld. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Huelskamp, Mr. Conaway,
Members of the Committee----

The Chairman. Scott, turn that microphone just a little bit more towards us. Thank you.

Mr. Neufeld. Thank you for holding this hearing on the farm bill. My name is Scott Neufeld and I'm a third generation farmer operating in a partnership with my father. We have a diversified operation, producing wheat, alfalfa hay for dairy use, canola, and grain sorghum. We also have a cow/calf herd and we raise stocker cattle on wheat pasture when the conditions allow. My wife and I have been very active in the Oklahoma Farm Bureau and I currently chair the Farm Bill Advisory Committee.

If I were to sum up my views on the farm bill, my advice would be straightforward and twofold. First, please keep Federal crop insurance strong and use the opportunity to make improvements; and second, make the focus of the farm bill be about addressing price protection during a multiyear downturn, a risk that crop insurance was never designed to address. If Washington does these two things, this farm bill will be a great success.

It's a testimony to the success of crop insurance protection and the current farm bill that producers are planting again this spring and moving forward with no outcry for ad hoc disaster assistance. The risk management tools that were in place during our recent drought were adequate and cheaper than funding additional disaster programs.

Areas where crop insurance can be improved track closely with the recommendations that Chairman Lucas and his colleagues made last fall. These recommendations include improving actual production histories to deal with multiple year losses so those APH's, and ultimately insurance coverage, reflect true production potential. I also appreciate the extensive enterprise units and the ability to divide enterprise units from irrigated versus non-irrigated practices.

Separate from the farm bill, I appreciate this Committee's leadership in closely monitoring what USDA is doing regarding crop insurance. In an effort to try to lower rates for some producers, I'm concerned that it may price the rest of the country out of coverage.

I also strongly oppose applying payment limits and means testing to crop insurance. The agricultural economy has driven many family-owned operations to become larger to spread risk and investment in capital. Why do we penalize the larger producer by restricting the amount of protection that he would be allowed? We need to change our mindset to a per acre basis, not a per operator basis. I also oppose entangling crop insurance with existing conservation compliance requirements, and I urge Members of Congress to oppose this effort.

As to the need for real price protection on the farm bill side of the equation, nearly everyone in this room can probably remember back to 2008 when we saw wheat prices climb to upwards of \$12 to \$13 per bushel and we all thought we had reached a

new plateau; but then a year later, in the 2009 marketing year, we can all remember seeing those prices drop dramatically to levels we thought we would never see again.

I can remember going to the elevator the day that I saw wheat prices with a "\$3" in front of them and thinking to myself, how am I going to make this work? Many producers were forced to sell at that level as well. While short-lived, it reminded me that the input costs that we deal with every day don't cycle as fast as the prices being bid at the elevator.

On this issue, here is my deep concern. All the revenue program ideas floating around out there will not provide the kind of protection farmers need if the depressed prices we just talked about remain in place for several years. If stuck at those levels, Washington would be inundated by calls for costly and unbudgeted emergency relief legislation. Neither taxpayers nor farmers can afford to go down that road again, so I call on Congress to focus the farm bill on providing real price protection for farmers in these periods of prolonged low prices. Fortunately, thanks to the Chairman and the work of his Committee, the 2011 package to the select committee would have met this basic test.

I would also like to stress the importance of NAP and the Livestock Forage Program to livestock producers like myself. Producers in my area also value the CSP and the EQIP programs. These initiatives, along with the MAP and foreign market development, along with aggressive agricultural research, are all modest in investment dollars but still unsung heroes in U.S. farm policy.

So let me start--let me finish where I started. As producers, we have two factors that affect our ability to be successful: yield and price. Please do not harm but build on crop insurance to provide yield protection, and please don't stray from the main mission of a farm bill; that is, providing a safety net by offering sound multi-year price protection. Passage of a 2012 Farm Bill would provide much-needed certainty to the future of agriculture and the businesses that support it. Thank you for allowing me to testify today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Neufeld follows:]

Prepared Statement of Scott Neufeld, Wheat, Sorghum, Canola, Alfalfa,
and Cow/Calf Producer, Fairview, OK

Introduction

Chairman Lucas, Ranking Member Peterson, Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing in the heart of wheat country, where producers understand and have experienced the need for sound farm policy, especially over the last 18 months. I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony as a producer who is impacted directly by the legislation that will be drafted.

My name is Scott Neufeld. I am a third generation farmer operating in a partnership with my father. We have a diversified 3,000 acre operation of wheat, alfalfa hay for dairy use, canola, grain sorghum, and a cow/calf herd. We also graze stocker cattle on wheat pasture as conditions allow. My wife and I have been actively involved with the Oklahoma Farm Bureau (OFB) serving on county and state boards and committees. Most recently, I was appointed to serve on the OFB Farm Bill Committee, which was given the task of studying and providing input into the drafting of the 2012 legislation. My wife also serves on the Oklahoma Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Committee.

Current Climate

I first want to commend you and the Committee for leading the way in the effort to produce bipartisan and bicameral legislation for the Select Committee last fall. The effort to work together was commendable and showed we can and will work out our differences in the current climate. A great framework was built for the discussions that have been ongoing these past several months. I understand the soaring and out of control debt this country faces weighs heavy on each of you as it does your constituents. I also recognize that in the face of increased global demand for food commodities combined with a weaker dollar, commodity prices are higher. But, as Chairman Lucas has stressed numerous times, we should not be fooled into putting a weakened farm policy in place. These current conditions occurring at a time where we need to draft a sound farm policy present challenges and dangers.

The American public enjoys the safest, most abundant, and most affordable food supply of any country in the world. Traveling abroad will dispel any doubt one may have. Yet, the general public is becoming more and more removed from where and how their food is grown and processed. Consumer understanding of the risks and investments agriculture makes on their behalf is under-appreciated. Somehow we must continue to work to bridge that gap and fortify consumer rapport with the American farmer. Public perception may only be perception, but

perception is reality and we must deal with this issue and not ignore it. For example, in my opinion, the attack on Direct Payments is a result of a misinformed public. We haven't done enough to educate the public about how those payments are really used. From funding conservation efforts to helping buy up crop insurance coverage to making investments in our rural communities or replacing a piece of well-used equipment, these are real expenses that help us efficiently produce a safe food supply.

I would like to remind everyone of the recent past where in 2008 we saw wheat prices climb to upwards of twelve to thirteen dollars a bushel. We thought we were on a new plateau or so we hoped. A year later in the 2009 marketing year, we saw those prices drop dramatically to levels we thought we would never see again. I remember going to the elevator the day we saw wheat prices with a \$3 in front of it again and thinking, "How am I going to make this work?" Many producers were forced to sell at those levels to meet financial obligations. Fortunately, that cycle didn't last long but it allowed us to experience first-hand how the input costs that we deal with everyday didn't cycle as fast as the prices being bid at the elevator.

Agriculture has been a bright spot and shining star in the current nation-wide recession. We have continued to create new jobs and establish a trade balance favorable to the U.S. economy. Let's not forget how important agriculture has been to the well-being of rural America as well as the supply of food and fiber to every U.S. citizen.

It is critical to work toward passing legislation during this session to provide some certainty to producers across the United States. An extension without a 5 year reauthorization is not adequate to allay the uncertainty that exists out there. A great framework has been put forth in the proposal to the Select Committee and the conversations are in place now to produce a workable and acceptable solution to the challenges agriculture face.

A Look Back

I was taught at an early age that a good way to make a plan forward is to look back on the past and see what has worked and why, and see what has not worked and why. The 1996 Farm Bill offered flexibility that had not been experienced previously. In the global and volatile markets of today, flexibility must remain a guiding principle as we craft new legislation. The 2002 and 2008 Farm bills continued on those principles including protection against low prices which lessened the need for ad hoc disaster assistance and have provided good management tools for producers to navigate risk. Did previous farm bills accomplish their goals? In most cases they have served producers well. Could they be improved? Always.

Some of the Challenges

As agriculture is transitioning, smaller bi-vocational producers are discontinuing their farming interests and older generations facing retirement are not selling their land but letting others operate it. It is becoming more difficult for operators to explain to land owners their options and keep current with sign-ups and know what they are signing. In my area, crop share arrangements are a popular renting agreement. While we as producers studied the options and knew which choices would be to our benefit, the complexity of explaining the details to a disengaged landowner has been an issue, therefore, causing confusion and in some cases even noncompliance.

ACRE and SURE are two examples of programs that are too complex. Program technicians in the local FSA office working scenarios on the same producer would come up with two different results. Furthermore, the triggers needed to make the program work encompassed too large of a geographical region. The marketing prices needed to calculate payments were far too removed from actual loss. Receiving a payment 14-16 months after actual production loss is not beneficial.

During the last 5 years, we have also seen our input prices steadily move higher. Most recently we have seen fuel prices soar. Seed, insurance, taxes, labor, and fertilizer all continue to increase. The CCP program has provided a floor but with the rising prices and costs, these levels are no longer relevant and need to be adjusted to offer true price protection.

Some of the Positives

When we look at the concepts of the 2008 Farm bill, we see it was a multi-faceted safety net including these components: Crop insurance, CCPs, MAL/LDPs, Direct Payments, ACRE, SURE, and conservation in the form of EQIP, CSP, CRP, and LFP, etc. Farm policy has become complex and for a reason. A "one-size-fits-all" approach cannot address the differences across commodities and regions of the country and even the same commodities across multiple regions. A cotton, peanut, or wheat producer from the Southern plains has many different risks, markets, and inputs as does a corn or soybean producer from the upper Midwest. The same differences are evident from the producers in Arizona and California to those in Pennsylvania and New York. Let's discuss several of these farm policy components.

Crop Insurance

Crop insurance has been the one tool that has provided us with a bankable guarantee to be able to go to our lenders and show them a minimum of what we could expect out of a crop. It has been flexible and provided coverage for most of the major crops in my area. I want to express my appreciation for the pace at which we were able to provide a full policy for Winter Canola in Oklahoma and the Southern Regions.

We have been pleased with the options and protection this tool has given us. Many producers in Oklahoma, Texas, and Western Kansas would be in a much different situation right now had it not been for a sound Crop Insurance policy that protected us from the historic drought we went through last fall, spring, and summer. While much of the drought-pressured areas have received adequate rainfall, many areas still remain well below normal and water sources for our livestock are not replenished. Irrigation reservoirs in southwest Oklahoma are still at less than 1/3 capacity to begin the growing season. Pastures will need rest to recover stands and nutrients needed to return to previous levels of production. When we see the record amount of indemnities paid out this last growing season and crop insurance coming under new attacks, none of us should forget the seriousness of the drought we have just come through. We should also remember the billions in cuts we have already taken. It is a testimony to the success of crop insurance protection that producers are planting again this spring and moving forward with no outcry for ad hoc disaster assistance. The risk management tools that were in place were adequate and cheaper overall than funding additional disaster programs.

I also strongly oppose applying payment limitations and means testing to Crop Insurance. The agricultural economy has driven many producers to become larger to spread risk and investment in equipment. A farmer producing crops on 1,000 acres of cropland has to have adequate capital invested to efficiently farm these acres. A partnership or family corporation that has gone together and is producing crops on 10,000 acres has the same risk per acre as the smaller producer. Why would we penalize the larger producer by restricting the amount of protection they would be allowed? We need to change our mindset to a per acre basis, not a per operator basis.

As producers already enrolled in the farm bill, conservation compliance is already a requirement to participate so I cannot see the need to entangle Crop Insurance with existing requirements and I urge Members of Congress to oppose this effort.

It doesn't make sense to put limits on larger acreages when farmers face payment limits under the farm bill. Crop insurance is their only real protection. Taking protection away from larger farms, which are still family-owned, will have a dramatic and negative economic and social impact in rural communities.

There is unwarranted criticism that current Crop Insurance offerings are driving up land and rent values and discouraging entry level producers. I believe the converse is actually true. If a young producer can't find levels that guarantee at least his variable costs to be covered, a lender is less likely to finance him. A beginning producer with limited capital and a higher level of debt to get started doesn't have the ability to absorb the level of risk an established producer does.

I am also aware of the process that the corn and soybean commodity groups have been through in the re-rating of their actuarial tables. The methodology is being reviewed to make sure it was sound and I am concerned about what the re-rating could do to other crops in the Southern Regions.

One area that Crop Insurance is not meant to cover is against chronic low prices. We always hope that between the base price and the harvest established price under crop insurance that there are break-even scenarios at one of those levels. But, what happens when we hit a multi-year downturn and don't have protection in place? Wheat prices at \$3-\$4 don't offer much hope at our current input levels. One could argue that if prices remain at these levels, we should just plant alternative crops and under decoupled farm bill policies we do have that option. That being said, the markets for those substitute crops tend to move in the same direction. Price-based protection is critically important to helping us stay in business during times of chronically low prices.

Direct Payments

The Direct Payment portion of the current farm bill has become a target for huge criticism. They have been hard to defend in times of good profitability for agriculture. While maybe hard to defend against unfair attacks, they have been easy to understand and administer for FSA, one of the parts of the suite of farm bill policies that is green box WTO compliant, and a payment you could take to the bank. An unseen benefit of the Direct Payments not often talked about is the impact they have on our rural economies. These payments are usually used locally to pay expenses to the businesses that provide parts and

services we need which in turn support our local economies.

NAP and LFP

Another part of farm policy often overlooked is the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). In Oklahoma, forage crops are important and many of these are grown on cropland acres but are not insurable through Crop Insurance. Grazing is also a large part of many of the wheat acres planted in our state. NAP has given us some protection in years where forage has been well below normal. NAP is not a "solve all the problems" policy, but it did provide about 20% of my own farm's lost revenue to assist in the loss of production our alfalfa hay crops experienced this past year. The indemnity made up only a small portion of the production loss we faced, but it did help make payments and get our operation through to hopefully a better year ahead.

LFP or Livestock Forage Program also paid out indemnities this past year in the drought stricken areas of our state. LFP did not keep us from culling our herd size but this assistance did allow us to buy several loads of feed we were short because of the inability to grow forage of any kind this past year, and still maintain our genetics in breeding stock. While this program does not have a baseline, it is my suggestion that these programs be fully funded going forward.

CRP

CRP has been useful to move highly erodible lands out of production. Because of the growth in the ethanol industry, feed grains have been in short supply. We should consider bringing out some of the acres that were enrolled in an environmentally responsible way to aid in the production of additional feed grains. We will need to continue to be careful stewards of the land and water resources we have enrolled in CRP being careful not to disturb highly erodible lands. Seeing pictures of the dust bowl reminds me that the conservation efforts put forth in this area, and particularly in the drought regions of this country, have prevented another dust bowl from starting again. Without the combination of the CRP and no-till or minimum till cultivating practices, the drought of 2011 would have been much worse. This is testimony to the efforts of producers all over the United States and their ability to be good stewards and adopt best management practices for each tract of land they operate.

Conservation

Conservation initiatives need to remain a significant part of the farm bill; however, I would urge the focus be on working lands rather than land retirement initiatives. The current cost share initiatives are working and most producers know how they work. I would encourage a streamlining of initiatives similar to the proposal to the Select Committee last fall, not as to impact the dollars spent but to again make the initiatives less complicated and more user friendly. Producers in my area like EQIP and CSP. With EQIP being a cost sharing initiative to promote quality efforts on farms that need some additional work and CSP offering incentives to engage in producer selected options to improve the environmental quality of their farms, I can't help but think they should be funded at current levels and other initiatives streamlined to fit within the scope of these two initiatives. Modeling new initiatives that producers already understand should be the goal. Conservation is a priority of any responsible producer today.

Research

Our land-grant universities in partnership with ARS have been critical in providing valuable non-biased research and extension education to many of the seed, chemical and management techniques being promoted to improve our efficiency. The role that ARS plays is often not seen by producers and the public but greatly increase the effectiveness of the research and extension efforts of the land-grant universities. The Wheat Quality Labs play huge roles in our marketing efforts. I urge continued emphasis on funding in the next farm bill to promote the level of research that will ultimately help us to feed nine billion people using less land and fewer resources.

Marketing

I want to express appreciation for the work in continuing to open markets around the world. The Free Trade Agreements with Columbia, S. Korea, and Panama will open more doors to the foreign agricultural trade. I urge full funding of MAP and FMD marketing tools that continue to work toward opening markets and maintaining existing ones around the world. Many of these tools match producer dollars to assist with marketing their commodities.

Importance of Not Affecting Planting Decisions

Red flags have been waved around concerning the part of the proposal to the Select Committee that considered raising target prices to more relevant levels. While flexibility is paramount and we do not want a government program influencing planting decisions, the levels I saw were still well below break-even prices and I cannot imagine how they would drive planting decisions. In fact, given shallow loss revenue programs would, by definition, trigger faster and more often,

it would seem that such programs that guarantee revenues based on higher prices and yields would be more susceptible to this kind of criticism.

Conclusion

Producers understand the crisis in our country and we are willing to do our fair share in reducing the deficit. We need sound crop insurance to cover the yield component of risk, price protection under the farm bill to insure against steep and chronic price declines, and a conservation title focused on improving practices on working lands. It is a huge testimony to the success of crop insurance protection combined with the other facets of farm policy that producers are planting again this spring and moving forward while there was no outcry for an ad hoc disaster program like there was in the late 1990s. We in agriculture have the tools and management ability to absorb minor changes in prices and yields. Concepts and program suggestions aimed at insuring losses as little as 5-10% are not warranted. American Farm Bureau has opposed these types of programs and stated that shallow loss coverage is fiscally irresponsible. Our focus must remain on a safety net that is based on crop insurance and protects from steep price declines over time and due to unforeseen circumstances, not on guaranteeing a profit.

I commend the efforts of you and your staff in the work that has been accomplished this far. I thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony as a part of the process and look forward to working with you as we move this process toward the passage of a 2012 Farm Bill.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Swanson, turn that microphone just a little bit more towards you and begin when you're ready.

STATEMENT OF TERRY SWANSON, CORN, WHEAT, SORGHUM, SUNFLOWER, AND COW/CALF PRODUCER, WALSH, CO

Mr. Swanson. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Conaway, Mr. Huelskamp. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today. My name is Terry Swanson and I farm and ranch in southeast Colorado with my wife, Marcella, and my son Miles and his family. Our farm is located 20 miles from Kansas and 20 miles from Oklahoma. Our principal crops are grain and forage sorghum, wheat, corn and sunflowers, all grown under dryland conditions. Our cattle operation includes a cow/calf enterprise and growing stocker/feeder cattle. I'm here to speak on behalf of my operation and others like it in my area.

Why am I here? This is a question I think that has to be answered first. My son is a fourth generation farmer in Baca County and is raising the fifth generation to make his home there. We want to contribute to the nation's food supply and in turn, to its economy, by providing an ample, reasonably-priced, secure, safe food supply. In turn, we expect to be able to live and have our livelihood in a relatively safe, secure agricultural environment that will sustain us and those that come after us.

It's important for me to acknowledge the work that the Committee did last fall, presenting the Super Committee with a package that not only addressed the needs of the ag community, but it also saved our nation \$23 billion. The product that the Committee did put together did all of the--virtually all of the things that I'm going to talk about here today. You should be proud, and we are grateful.

We have had an unfortunate cropping sequence for the last 8 to 10 years in southeast Colorado. The rotation is one year of good crops and the other one is one year of indemnity payments, and those things are the only thing we've had to take to the bank. Therefore, I strongly feel that the next farm bill must have, like the rest of the people on the panel mentioned, have crop insurance as its backbone. Please do no harm to crop insurance, but rather, improve it with better APH methodology and a T-yield system. Workable insurance products for forage sorghum and trend yields will also help for all crops.

The commodity title: like crop insurance, the commodity title must provide provisions for systemic risks, such as drought, to be viable for this area of southwest Kansas, Oklahoma Panhandle, Texas Panhandle, and all of eastern Colorado.

There are two kinds of risks: one of them is production risk and the other one is price risk. For the next farm bill to accomplish the goals that we have set before us, we must address both. As you can see, I have enough gray hair to show you that I've experienced both of these risks many, many times, and you can't afford to ignore either one of them.

The end product expressed in the commodity title must not favor one crop over another at signup. I must be able to choose my cropping decisions agronomically at the farm, rather than at the FSA office, choosing whichever program will pay the best.

The program offered should not only pay out with the loss. I should be able to provide the producer--it should be able to provide the producer a bridge between successful crops and markets and those that are difficult due to circumstances beyond the farmer's control. These circumstances can be environmental factors or they can be market influences that are unforeseen and, therefore, unable to be offset with other risk management tools.

I wanted to bring with me a bag of soil. I was going to call it a bag of dirt, but my son is a soils major and he said you have to call it soil, but I was advised otherwise, but everything that we do starts with the dirt. If we don't take care of the dirt, it won't take care of us. Therefore, I'm passionate about conservation.

I live in the epicenter of the Dust Bowl. I know the effects of poor conservation practices. I've implemented CSP and EQIP contracts and their associated practices on my farm and my ranch, and I've seen immediate positive results from the technical support and the financial remuneration that these programs can provide. They provide a segue from current practices to those of enhanced conservation, not only for this generation of producers, but for all who are on the land in the future, and I might add, that's an investment in the sustainability of this nation's food supply.

We live in a very water sensitive area. The crop that I raise a lot of, sorghum, is the most water-efficient crop that we have available. I would hope that we could have that efficiency be expressed and encouraged in the conservation title.

Again, provide the producer with the right choices and he will effectively and safely produce an ample food for this country's nutrition and security as well. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Swanson follows:]

Prepared Statement of Terry Swanson, Corn, Wheat, Sorghum, Sunflower,
and Cow/Calf Producer, Walsh, CO

Introduction

I thank Chairman Lucas, Congressman Huelskamp and the entire House Committee on Agriculture for holding this hearing in Kansas, the heart of America and farm country. I also thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the impact future farm policy under the next farm bill will have on my operation.

My name is Terry Swanson, and my wife Marcella and I grow grain sorghum, wheat, corn, forage sorghum, sunflower, and raise cattle on our farm and ranch in southeast Colorado near Walsh--an area that I and those before me refer to as the epicenter of the Dust Bowl. It is a challenging area to live and work, but we have been doing so for 42 years now, and there are several pieces in the farm legislation puzzle that enable us to manage our risks and continue to live and operate efficiently today. I live 20 miles from Kansas and 20 miles from Oklahoma and am honored to share my Colorado perspective.

I appreciate the work put forth by this Committee in developing the next farm bill and the bipartisan approach agriculture has taken up to this point to try and develop a comprehensive farm bill package. I realize the need now more than ever for this industry to work together and look forward to working with the Committee to craft this set of vital farm policy. Because it is an integral part of my operation, my testimony will focus on multiple areas of farm policy as they relate to my safety net.

Protect Federal Crop Insurance

My area experienced one of the driest periods of all time during last year's drought. Keeping up with feed requirements for my cattle and growing any crop at all were a struggle in 2011, but because I invest in crop insurance to protect my business investment, I am able to farm and ranch again in 2012. Crop insurance is by far the most important component of my safety net, and I ask that the Committee does not harm this essential program. I have some specific suggestions that I believe would enhance the Federal crop insurance program.

I would suggest reforms to APH methodology and a better county T-yield system to reduce the impact of local weather events and allow the producer's insurable yield (pre-deductible) to reflect what the producer and his lender would actually reasonably expect to produce in that year. I believe a personal T-yield system, which would allow a producer's APH to more accurately reflect his yield potential, would be a

productive way to improve APH.

Forage sorghum is an important part of my operation, because its high yield and low water use make it an ideal winter feed crop for my livestock operation. A usable forage insurance product would offer needed protection for diversified producers like me.

In no case should the crop insurance tools, which are purchased by the producer, be weighed down with environmental compliance requirements or other conditions that fall out of the scope of insurance.

I would encourage RMA to include all crops in any trend yield program. It is unfair to allow certain counties and certain crops to have this option.

2012 Farm Bill

I understand the Committee has considered various policy options for title I. For both the health of my operation and my sensibility of Federal farm programs, I prefer to have a deep loss, price protection plan. Whether that protection is a reference price system or a revenue based system, it is important that it be in the farm bill safety net and producers have the option to choose what fits their operation and risk appetite the best. In a revenue based program, it is critical to have a reference price and plug yields. The reference price will protect against a large commodity price drop and plug yields will help in times of consecutive years of drought.

It seems that without yield plugs, in a situation with 2 consecutive years of loss, the protection quickly drops to a point where the program would have little value and would provide almost no protection for my farm. This component is necessary to ensure equity among regions because I grow in a region with such high yield variability.

Additionally, a revenue policy in conjunction with the potential use of adjusted yields for certain commodities could eliminate the important element of risk involved in growing a crop. This would create a situation that would greatly distort planting intentions because a farmer may be inclined to plant for the largest revenue guarantee as opposed to the most prudent agronomic choice.

No matter which form of policy the Committee pursues, special care must be taken to encourage crop diversity and rotation on the farm and avoid a monoculture system which rejects agronomics in favor of farm policy incentives. The environmental disaster of the Dust Bowl was influenced in part by continuous monoculture cropping, and Federal farm programs should not incentivize producers to repeat the mistakes of the past. Based on both experience and a producer's understanding of the program, I suggest the following:

A farm bill should not dictate or distort planting decisions. Direct payments are excellent in that they are the most flexible safety net available. SURE or similar whole farm policies tend to discourage diversification, which could be problematic for me and especially my geographic area. Any commodity-specific program that is tied to planted acres must be very carefully designed to avoid creating payment scenarios that incentivize farmers to plant crops with higher inherent value to maximize payments rather than making the wisest possible agronomic decisions.

A program should be simple and bankable. The recently expired SURE program had too many factors and was not tailored to the many business risks producers face--it was not simple. The current ACRE, while offering improved price-based protection, is based on the state's income, not mine, so I could suffer a total loss and not trigger a payment if the rest of my state had no such misfortune--it is not bankable, especially in a largely diverse state like Colorado. The current loan and counter cyclical programs are simple and bankable. Unfortunately, the 2008 price levels are no longer relevant given current production costs. It is important to me to have a simple, bankable program to take to my lender should disaster strike my crop.

A farm bill should be targeted and defensible. It makes sense to provide assistance when factors beyond the producers' control create losses.

A farm bill should be built to withstand a multi-year low price scenario. Whether in a price-based countercyclical plan or a revenue loss plan, it will be important to have a set

minimum price that serves as a floor or reference price to protect producer income in a relevant way in the event of a series of low price years. Ideally, this minimum could move upward over time should production costs also increase.

Finally, direct payments, while not necessarily tied to a specific crop being planted, have proven to be a WTO compliant, efficient payment for producers. It is one of the few parts of the current safety net that give bankers certainty and will provide financing for our producers. However, if the Committee decides to move away from this program, it makes it that much more important that successor policies be bankable.

Eliminate Dated Pay Limits

Given the likely possibility that a new farm program would have less certainty for the producer (a likely decrease or elimination of direct payments) and will therefore be designed to provide assistance only in loss situations, the program should not be limited based on arbitrary dollar limits, i.e., assistance should be tailored to the size of loss. A producer should not be precluded from participating in a farm program because of past income experience. In my area, farms are large, both because it takes a lot of acres to produce a marketable crop or to support each head of cattle and because the rugged nature of farming and ranching here has driven many producers to so called greener pastures since the Dirty 30s. As such, any internal program limits on assistance should be percentage-based (i.e., 25 percent of an expected crop value) and not discriminate based on the size of farm.

Build Incentives into Conservation and Energy Titles

I am personally passionate about conservation, and a variety of farm bill conservation programs have allowed me to enhance environmental improvement activities on my farm and ranch. I use EQIP, CSP and CRP in various ways. All three have shown demonstrable results over the life of the last farm bill. The value of these programs cannot be overstated in a sensitive area like mine, and I urge the Committee to maintain and strengthen conservation activities wherever possible.

For my part, I believe it would be beneficial to strengthen the principles of water conservation language in the Ag Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) of the 2008 Farm Bill to more specifically encourage planting water saving crops and enhancing water quantity. Currently, the program allows incentives for switching to lower water intensity crops, but a vast majority of payments are going to other projects. There is also a place for water conservation language in existing Conservation Security Program (CSP) and Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) language, and water conservation options should be strengthened wherever practical. Using farm bill conservation programs as a transitional support, farmers will be able to economically justify switching higher value crops to lower water intensity crops over time. In my area and across the Southwest, producers' near-term conservation initiatives will help preserve and repair the Ogallala Aquifer that this area relies upon.

Additionally, I support the continuation of a farm bill energy title and specifically encourage continuing the Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels from Section 9005 of the 2008 Farm Bill. It has enhanced markets in my area and I'm proud that farmers are contributing to our national security by lessening oil from the Middle East.

Livestock in My Operation

Throughout the High Plains, most of the people I know have livestock. The recent drought generated a tremendous feed demand, and the dollars needed to offset the drought increased with it. Even so, herd dispersement was rampant. Livestock producers have benefitted greatly from the 2008 Farm Bill, especially during the drought. Livestock plays a pivotal role in my operation, and we cannot forget about the livestock producer in the next farm bill.

In conclusion, I know the Committee faces a difficult task in balancing geographic and commodity differences. It is hard to make a one-size-fits-all package, so I would just like to reiterate the most important things to me are long term, deep loss price protection, a solid insurance program and the ability for each producer to choose among policies.

The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Swanson.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes for questions and would note to my colleagues, with the kind of bright and insightful panels we have on both this and the next panel, we'll have some definite flexibility in the amount of time we're using.

Mr. Vaughan, you're probably aware that a letter from a few of our national commodity groups was sent to the United States Senate yesterday. Are you a member of any of those groups?

Mr. Vaughan. Yes, sir, I am.

The Chairman. Not to put you on the spot, but just simply

asking. The letter suggests that corn growers oppose any form of price protection. As a corn grower, do you agree with that perspective?

Mr. Vaughan. No. I'm a former President of that organization and I'm a member of the Soybean Association and a Farm Bureau member and a member of the Wheat Growers, and I do not agree with that statement that was made in there, that they do not support a price-based protective system, and that's what we need. That's what we need out here in this country, if we have multi-year losses like we had in 1997 through 2005.

The Chairman. They seem to say, or imply, and it says the phrase that it would distort planting decisions and that a shallow loss revenue plan based on the last 5 years of revenue will not. Any concerns with that statement?

Mr. Vaughan. Yes, I do. Isn't it true that basically the farm bill distorts planting in and of itself? I mean, what is the purpose of the farm bill? It's to keep farmers producing so that we don't have a situation where we create a huge surplus and then prices go to the bottom and we just--farmers can't get money to plant and so they just have to stop for a year. How would that system work?

I mean, it takes a year. We're not like an auto plant where we can shut down for 3 or 4 weeks and let supply and demand come back into balance. It takes a year to grow a crop, and so we have to keep producing. We need price protection that enables us to--for lenders to keep lending, rural America to keep working, and farmers to keep farming.

So with that said, I would say all policies distort plantings to a certain extent; even crop insurance, the way it's structured. I mean, we have to set a stake in the ground and say, okay, this is the crop price, the guaranteed crop price for the year for crop insurance, but what if it changes three or four more times during the year? Obviously, those planting--what that planting guarantee is for crop insurance has an influence on prices, or on crop plantings; so even if crop insurance has distorted the plantings to some extent, the idea that revenue doesn't, I can't buy into that, because a farmer--if prices are low for all commodities, which they generally are all at the same time, and a farmer goes in and he looks at it and he says, okay, I grew corn and soybeans. I'm going to look at my revenue guarantee under my revenue plan, I'm going to look at my crop insurance guarantee, and I'm going to plant corn if it's the best one for under that system, or I'll plant soybeans if it's the best, and so even that revenue plan, that's where I disagree. When they say that the revenue plan is not going to distort plantings to any extent at all, that's--I think that's totally false.

The Chairman. Fair statement. Scott, why don't crop insurance and these revenue programs provide the price protection you need, from your perspective?

Mr. Neufeld. Well, from my perspective, obviously, we set a base price in crop insurance usually in the fall months for us wheat producers, and then there's a harvest price set during the month of harvest, usually in the month of June, and you get the greater of those two. If per chance we get into those years of multi-year low prices and we have \$3¹/₂, \$4¹/₂ prices that are set for those target prices and base prices during those times, and you multiply that by your yield, your revenue guarantee is well below your break-even, and I just--the crop insurance, the way the crop insurance prices are set, if we get into years at multi-low prices, the revenue guarantees don't guarantee us a break-even anymore, where this year, it's just the opposite, actually.

With this year, we had some great prices set during the fall and we have good, good revenue guarantees, but if we get--and our guarantees are well above our break-evens now, or they're going to provide us a profit, anyway.

The Chairman. You rightly point out that there are a great number of people out there who are misinformed, in your testimony, about the importance of direct payments. Can you give us an appreciation for the relevance of the direct payments in your operation, the direct payments that have been the foundation of the safety net of the last three farm bills?

Mr. Neufeld. Direct payments in my operation have amounted to anywhere between an \$8 to an \$11 per acre type of a payment. What can that do for us? What has it done for me on my farm? It's allowed me to replace equipment that needed to be replaced. It allowed me to buy some crop insurance, possibly buy up-coverage on crop insurance, and I think one thing that we don't see in direct payments are all the dollars that are

pumped into these rural economies through direct payments are spent locally, so we don't often talk about the support that it has been to our rural economies, but those dollars, in essence, are rural economic development as well.

The Chairman. And as my colleagues would indulge me, I'll continue, if you'd also expand. Now, there are some folks that if they have their way, they would limit, put a pay limit of \$40,000 on the portion of your premium that the government shares. How would that impact your ability to insure your crop, obtain loans from the banker, and how would it affect young farmers who are just starting out?

Mr. Neufeld. That's a good question. You know, the payment limits on crop insurance premiums probably would not directly affect my operation because I'm not large enough to get into those levels where that would. But, I know many family-owned corporations that it would affect their ability to buy the level of crop insurance that they would desire.

A young producer just starting out, would it level the playing field for them? I'm not sure. It probably wouldn't, but it does--crop insurance does give us a bankable guarantee that when we go to the bank, we can say this is the amount of revenues that I'm going to get, regardless of the price or the yield it happens to make.

The Chairman. And my farmers remind me, your neighbors, our fellow neighbors in Oklahoma, that all those records have to be in that loan portfolio file; that it's not just the banker that wants it. It's the examiners who demand the bankers have that in the file, so it's critically important.

Mr. Swanson, you talk about the importance of farm policy not influencing a producer's planting decisions.

Given what you know about the effort last fall, in your judgment, would that policy have influenced your planting decisions if the farm bill had become a--the effort in the Super Committee become the farm bill?

Mr. Swanson. Well, I have to yield to what Mr. Vaughan said. I think all things influence planting decisions, and it probably absolutely would. However, if we have--for instance, if we had price--price protection and it was equitable across the board, that should not influence your decision, just because of that price protection; and so those things that were put forth, I think were influenced--it influenced it, but it influenced it probably a minimal amount.

The Chairman. I guess to go straight to the point, the reference prices discussed in the 2000 Farm Bill effort, would that have addressed your concern about the need for price protection in periods of low prices?

Mr. Swanson. Yes, sir.

The Chairman. Thank you. Mr. Miller, kind of a philosophical question. You mention that you've grown your operation, in your testimony, from 400 acres that your father farmed to 7,500 now. When you listen to the national dialogue, are you led to believe that large farms are bad and the idea of the ideal farm is small, the family-owned farm?

Can you explain why you chose--that's what--if you listen to the national dialogue, that's what you believe, based on what you hear. Can you explain your choice to expand and could you sustain your family today on that 400 acres your father farmed in 1976? I know it's almost a simple, a silly question to ask, but it's relevant for the record.

Mr. Miller. No, there's no way that we could survive on the 400 acres my father had when we started. The reason I grow my farm is we pool assets; we pool machinery; we pool capital; we pool buying power for buying large volumes of seed, fertilizer, and everything else; and it's made the operation of our farm a lot cheaper per acre.

My farm actually includes two other operators with me, my nephew and my daughter and husband, and they absolutely could not start without me helping them, and by pooling everything together, we have the opportunity to do so.

The Chairman. Absolutely. My time has expired and I appreciate the indulgence of my colleagues. I now turn to the gentleman from Texas, the Chairman of the General Farm Commodities and Risk Management Subcommittee, and a fellow who may have even fewer trees than you have or I have at home. Mr. Conaway.

Mr. Conaway. Well, I do represent a Committee called "Notrees". The first guy on the Committee, the Chairman, put me on the Forestry Subcommittee. We went to the city limits of Notrees, Texas. I had my picture taken by the city limit sign and gave it to the Chairman and said, I'm probably not the

right guy to deal with forestry concerns.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am reminded, though, that sharing questions with the Chairman is like sharing a hamburger with a lion. I learned everything I know from Pat Roberts. I'm his son.

The Chairman. I was back then, too.

Mr. Conaway. I would like to just--I think Mr. Miller and Mr. Harshberger may have mentioned it as well--turn to crop insurance, the differentials or the differences between irrigated practices and dryland farming and how that would work if you were somehow to bifurcate insurance units into separate. Can you kind of walk me through how you envisioned that would work?

Mr. Miller. Well, what I'm concerned about is the--right now, it's either dryland or it's irrigated, and if we would put it by the enterprise units, we could have either separate enterprises that have both the irrigated and dryland and that would be----

Mr. Conaway. Separate?

Mr. Miller. Well, yes. We need to do something to be able to differentiate, because our irrigation yields for corn in our area are in the 140 to 170 range, and dryland is in the 50 to 60, and you can't commingle them and it's a real mess for us, so somehow we need to address that issue.

The limited irrigation is also a real major issue with that because, like last year, everybody told us we ought to shut our wells down because everything was a total disaster, but the crop insurance, where we had them insured for definitely for irrigation, they said we had to keep running them, and that was just water getting wasted, because the crop was already done.

Mr. Conaway. The GAO report on--it's still serving by the folks who asked for the report. Can you guys, each of you, walk us through how the impact of the \$40,000 limit and--or tie in conservation practices that you wouldn't otherwise have been doing to get that, how do you see that being implemented and impacting your operation? Anybody? Just start with Dee, anybody with comments.

Mr. Vaughan. When that came out about a week ago, we did a little analysis and what we discovered is that if a guy in Texas, the Panhandle there, is buying 65 percent coverage, he's basically getting about \$40 per acre in subsidy; so in fact, what it would do is limit it to about a thousand-acre farm. You could go to your banker, and there are not many thousand-acre farms in our area. In our area, they just don't work. You have to be larger to get efficiency of scale.

So what you have is a situation where you'd either have to go to your banker and say, well, I'm sorry, but I can insure a thousand acres and everything after that was on its own, or take a lower coverage. Maybe you could go to 5,100, but then you have to go back to your banker as well and say, I'm insuring my crop for less than what I did last year, so it's going to have a tremendous impact. I mean, if that policy was enacted, it would be a terrible policy.

As far as conservation compliance, I exceed what is in my conservation plan anyway. I'm strictly a strip till and no-till farmer. That's not in my conservation plan. It goes above and beyond what I have to do, and as mentioned, our land is what we do. It's our biggest asset. Why would we jeopardize it by misusing it or abusing it?

Mr. Conaway. Sure. Scott?

Mr. Neufeld. As I read that GAO report, it was going through my mind, something that I could equate this to that we could get our heads around, and as I thought about it, natural disasters hitting different communities in this country. In essence, putting those limits on would be like saying that we're going to give a FEMA disaster declaration and assistance to Chicago the same as we are going to give to Minneola, Kansas. Things are to scale in this country and our ag production entities are that same way, and it's just like I said, if we are going to limit farm size to 1,000 acres, that's going to dictate what kind of risk you're going to be able to take.

Mr. Swanson. I think we're getting into that philosophical area real, real quick and deep in the weeds, but when we help other things and other industries in this country, let's say we're going to build a wind farm, we don't tell the wind farm people that we're going to help you build the first eight windmills and then you're going to have to build the other 27 on your own. We help them build all of them.

We don't help the airlines with a few, if we decided that

the airline industry needs to be a mom and pop type operation and we're not going to let you have but a few airplanes. We think you can serve with that, and so why do we not treat agriculture as a business like we do other things, and the-- we're required to do that when we get financing. We're required to do that.

Our country encourages growth, encourages progress, and it seems to me like--and pardon me if I'm getting a little bit sensitive here. Seems to me like the ag community is the only one that's looked on disparagingly when we grow, and we have some problems with that.

Mr. Conaway. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Kansas for 5 minutes, Mr. Huelskamp.

Mr. Huelskamp. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the first question would be for Mr. Harshberger. I had invited someone from the EPA to come here and listen, and it's my understanding out of the thousands of folks that work there, no one had time to come and listen, but if they were here, what would you tell them about your desire to protect the environment on your family farm?

Mr. Harshberger. It was mentioned by Mr. Swanson. It's about the dirt, and I've always stated that farmers are active environmentalists. Our livelihood depends upon the health of that dirt, so we are the world's conservationist. Now, there are some things that we can help with like, for instance, with the water in eastern Kansas, we have an issue of sedimentation in our reservoirs, and so with the funds like EQIP and AWEP, we're able to enhance the streambeds to avoid that sedimentation, so there are things that we're already doing. We're already in tune with what we need for our farms, for our dirt. There are some things that we can have assistance on to take us to the next step forward, but I think we are the first active environmentalists.

Mr. Huelskamp. Thank you. Mr. Miller, a question. You mentioned exports and I have a broad background in that. Can you describe for the Committee and the folks here what our foreign competitors do that make it difficult for us to compete internationally?

Mr. Miller. Yes. Our foreign competitors, for one thing, all have animal ID and it's mandatory, and that particular issue is causing us a lot of grief overseas. If you notice, China just recently decided to take exports from Canada and we're still not in there, and the only reason they did so is because they had mandatory ID in Canada. That's becoming a major issue for our country doing business overseas. A lot of your businesses in Japan, Korea, and places like that actually have TV monitors set up and you can scan a bar code on a product and actually see where the product came from. The consumer is driving it over there and it's an issue that we don't--that we haven't been able to address here in the U.S. The pork side does have mandatory ID, but the beef side doesn't, so that's an issue we're going to have to tackle somehow through either incentive, through voluntary or some other method, but exports are booming overseas and the demand's there.

The reports say that we have to double production by the year 2050 in order to be able to feed all the people that are going to be in the world, and we're in the prime area to produce a lot of product and ship it overseas and make a profit, but we have to make sure that we have the right safety nets here now so that we all can stay in business and be able to produce that food instead of ship it in from overseas.

Mr. Huelskamp. Thank you. Mr. Swanson, what are your thoughts on conservation programs, the number of programs that we have? There have been proposals to consolidate those, consolidate applications. You're in an area, the epicenter of the Dust Bowl. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about that.

Mr. Swanson. Well, I'm all for improving bureaucratic efficiency, and if that's--can you say those two words in the same sentence? I'm not sure. But at the same time, we do know that in order to administer something, we have to have a bureaucracy to do it, and so if those consolidations make the product that the farmer needs, the producer needs, the rancher needs a better product, and makes it easier to access and to implement, I'm all for it. If it saves us money in the process, I'm all for it, but I think that we really do need to strengthen our relationship with the local soil conservation district boards. They know what's going on; they know what will

work in their area; they know what those things are; and those bureaucracies need to listen to them, and so I guess that's not a very good answer to a very good question.

Mr. Huelskamp. Mr. Vaughan, I have time for one more question. Just curious. Talk about your cost of production. Would you say generally what it is today or what it was compared to, say, 5 years ago for, say, corn?

Mr. Vaughan. It's been up and down like a roller coaster over the last few years. In 2008, it peaked. It was approximately about \$4\1/2\ a bushel growing a bushel of corn that year, because of high natural gas costs. We irrigate, we use natural gas, and it was a back-breaker that year, with fertilizer costs.

Mr. Huelskamp. What was your average sale price that year?

Mr. Vaughan. Approximately around--we had forward contracted a lot of product earlier and sold it for in the \$4\1/2\-\$5 range, so it was basically a break-even year, even though USDA reported record farm income that year. I talked to a lot of producers that were in the same boat. It's back down now because of energy cost.

Natural gas, of course, is much cheaper than it was in 2008, so it's--we're back down considerably.

Mr. Huelskamp. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. Thank you, and I'd like to once again acknowledge the outstanding insights that the first panel provided to us today and dismiss you gentlemen. Thank you for your participation and we'll now call the second panel of witnesses to the table.

As they're coming up and the name tags are being placed, we'll have on our second panel Mr. Frank Harper, a corn, soybean, wheat, sorghum and cow/calf producer from Sedgewick, Kansas. We'll have Mr. Kendall Hodgson, wheat, soybean, corn, sorghum, alfalfa and cow/calf producer from Little River, Kansas; Mr. Tom Giessel, a wheat, corn, sorghum, soybean, alfalfa, and cow/calf producer from Larned, Kansas; Mr. Woody Anderson, a cotton and wheat producer from Colorado City, Texas; and Mr. Zach Hunnicutt, a corn, soybean, and popcorn producer from Aurora, Nebraska.

One thing about it, when you have a hearing in our part of the world, you have a diversity of production. That's wonderful, and whenever you're ready, Mr. Harper, you may begin.

STATEMENT OF FRANK HARPER, CORN, SOYBEAN, WHEAT, SORGHUM, AND COW/CALF PRODUCER, SEDGEWICK, KS

Mr. Harper. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Huelskamp, and Mr. Conaway. My name is Frank Harper and I thank you for the opportunity to be here today. My wife and I, Mary, we have a cow/calf backgrounding and farming operation near Sedgewick, Kansas. Our cattle operation consists of both registered commercial cows, and we typically background our calves and then retain ownership through the feeding phase. Our farming operation consists of wheat, grain sorghum, corn, soybean, and includes both dryland and irrigated production. I currently serve as President of the Kansas Livestock Association and serve on the Board of Directors of the National Cattleman's Beef Association, of which KLA is an affiliate.

The beef industry is a key segment of the Kansas economy, and the Kansas beef industry is a major piece of the U.S. beef industry. Kansas ranks third nationally with 6.1 million cattle on ranches and in the feedyards. Those cattle generated \$6.53 billion in cash receipts in 2010.

Development of the next farm bill is an important process for livestock producers. The vast majority of my fellow livestock producers believe the livestock industry is best served by the process of free enterprise and free trade. Even with its imperfections, free trade is more equitable than regulated and subsidized markets, which often distort production and market signals. We oppose attempts to narrow the business options or limit the individual freedom of livestock producers to innovate in the management and marketing of their production.

I oppose the inclusion of the livestock title in the next farm bill. The livestock title in the last farm bill attracted proposals like the GIPSA rule, mandatory country-of-origin labeling, and other items that are counter to the free enterprise system that I support.

Items with industry-wide support can be included in the miscellaneous title, just as they have been in every farm bill

prior to the 2008 bill.

I strongly oppose, as do the vast majority of Kansas cattle producers, the proposed regulation issued by the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration on June 22, 2010. In short, U.S. producers are concerned that the GIPSA rule would greatly expand the role of government in marketing livestock and eliminate producers' ability to market livestock to capture the benefits of their efforts to improve the quality of their livestock.

Over the years, I've invested in genetics that have helped me improve the quality and consistency of the calves I produce. To capitalize on this investment, I retain ownership of my calves and feed them in a commercial feedyard. This allows me to market my calves through programs like U.S. Premium Beef, Certified Angus Beef, and other programs that allow me to earn premiums for the high quality cattle.

The GIPSA rule would require purchases of my cattle to justify paying more than the "standard price" for my livestock. If my competitors don't agree with the justification the packer offers by paying me for more than the standard price for my livestock, the packer could be sued. Common business sense tells me it wouldn't be long before the packer no longer would be interested in our agreement. This means I'll be back to selling cattle at a price based on averages, instead of actual value. My investment in superior genetics could be lost or severely compromised.

The rule goes far beyond the intent of Congress. Members of this Committee will recall several of the proposals contained in this rule were either defeated or withdrawn during consideration of the last farm bill. We strongly urge you to take action to prevent the implementation of this rule.

Country-of-origin labeling continues to be an area of concern for us. Last year, the World Trade Organization ruled in favor of Canada and Mexico in their complaint against the U.S. mandatory COOL program, and it is in the interest of the U.S. beef industry to resolve this dispute before retaliatory action is taken. Organizations like KLA and NCBA strongly encourage the inclusion of language in the next farm bill to address the WTO finding.

For additional questions, I would refer you to my written comments. Again, thank you for the opportunity to be here and I'll entertain any questions at the appropriate time. Thanks.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Harper follows:]

Prepared Statement of Frank Harper, Corn, Soybean, Wheat, Sorghum, and Cow/Calf Producer, Sedgewick, KS

Mister Chairman and Members of the Committee, my name is Frank Harper. My wife Mary and I have a cow/calf, backgrounding and farming operation near Sedgwick, Kansas. Our cattle operation consists of both registered and commercial cows. We typically background our calves then retain ownership through the feeding phase. Our farming operation consists of wheat, grain sorghum, soybeans and corn and includes dryland and irrigated production. I am President of the Kansas Livestock Association (KLA) and serve on the Board of Directors of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), of which KLA is an affiliate. I am very pleased to be with you today.

The beef industry is a key segment of the Kansas economy and the Kansas beef industry is a major piece of the U.S. beef industry. Kansas ranks third nationally with 6.1 million cattle on ranches and in feedyards. Those cattle generated \$6.53 billion in cash receipts in 2010. Kansas is a national leader in cattle feeding and beef processing. The Kansas beef cow herd is the seventh largest in the country at 1.43 million head. Also, the presence of Kansas State University, the Animal Health Corridor and the proposed National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility makes Kansas a world leader in animal health research.

Development of the next farm bill is an important process for livestock producers. Whether directly or indirectly, the provisions included in the farm bill can have a dramatic impact on livestock producers' businesses. I oppose agriculture policies that pit one industry group against another, distort market signals and inadvertently cause economic harm to the livestock sector.

The vast majority of my fellow livestock producers believe the livestock industry is best served by the process of free enterprise and free trade. Even with its imperfections, free trade is relatively more equitable than regulated and subsidized markets which retard innovation and distort production and market signals. We oppose attempts to narrow the business options or limit the individual freedom of livestock producers to innovate in the management and marketing of their production.

I oppose inclusion of a "Livestock Title" in the next farm bill. The livestock title in the last farm bill attracted proposals like the GIPSA rule, mandatory country-of-origin labeling and other items counter to the free enterprise system I support.

Items with industry-wide support can be included in the "Miscellaneous Title", just as they have been in every farm bill prior to the 2008 bill. I ask for the support of Members of this Committee in opposing a livestock title in the next farm bill.

GIPSA Proposed Rule on Livestock Marketing

I strongly oppose, as do the vast majority of Kansas cattle producers, the proposed regulation issued by the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) on June 22, 2010. I would refer you to comments filed by KLA and NCBA which may be found at <http://www.kla.org/proposedgipsarule.aspx>. Although USDA has not advanced the most egregious portions of the regulation for final rulemaking, the threat remains, especially after the current appropriations restriction expires in September.

Beef producers throughout Kansas and the United States are concerned the proposed regulation would greatly expand the role of government in marketing livestock and eliminate producers' rights and ability to market livestock to capture the benefits of their efforts to improve the quality of their livestock.

As outlined in both sets of comments, the regulation outlines new definitions to be used to interpret the Packers and Stockyards Act that would expand the jurisdiction of USDA over all marketing arrangements. USDA would require the reporting of marketing arrangements and then would post them on the USDA website. Producers participating in marketing arrangements would have limited ability to protect their private information from public disclosure.

The proposed regulation has broad application and may include existing contractual arrangements if the agreement between the buyer and the seller were modified by the parties. The proposal also would require buyers to justify any discount or premium paid. USDA then would review these transactions and make determinations of violations based upon its judgment, not marketplace economics.

The proposal includes new definitions of "competitive injury" and "likelihood of competitive injury" and new listings of circumstances that may be considered "unfair, unjustly discriminatory and deceptive practices or devices." Both sets are so broad that mere accusations, without economic proof, would suffice for USDA or an individual to bring a lawsuit against a buyer.

The proposal's new listings of criteria that USDA would use to determine whether an undue or unreasonable preference or advantage was made by a buyer include requiring the buyer to make similar offers to all livestock producers; requiring the buyer to make price premium offers in a manner that does not discriminate against any other seller; and requiring the buyer to make offers known to all sellers if such offer is made to one or more seller.

We believe these provisions would negatively impact producers and consumers in the following ways.

Lost Opportunities and Lost Profits: Cattle producers are concerned this regulatory proposal, coupled with the risk of litigation from USDA and citizen suits, likely would cause buyers to withdraw marketing arrangements rather than run the risk of litigation, civil penalties and potential revocation of licenses.

If marketing arrangements were restricted, producers and consumers would be the losers. The proposed regulation would restrict cattle producers' freedom to market their cattle as they see fit. It would limit their opportunity to capture more of the value of their cattle and eliminate important risk management tools. Regulating marketing agreements would impact nearly 65% of the fed cattle market.

The proposed regulations ultimately may remove products consumers prefer. Producers have responded to consumer demand by finding innovative ways to develop and market premium quality and branded products. These alternative marketing arrangements have allowed producers to get paid for the added value. These arrangements ensure a consistent supply of livestock and poultry that meet the requirements of such programs. Without this consistent supply, these programs cannot be sustained.

The 2007 USDA GIPSA Livestock and Meat Marketing Study found reducing or eliminating the use of alternative marketing arrangements (AMAs) would negatively affect both producers and consumers. No segment of the beef industry, from the ranch to the consumer, would benefit from the reduction or elimination of these marketing arrangements. The GIPSA study results showed if AMAs were reduced 25%, the 10 year cumulative effect would be a loss of \$5.141 billion for feeder cattle producers; a loss of \$3.886 billion for fed cattle producers; and a loss of \$2.539 billion for consumers. If marketing arrangements were eliminated, the 10 year cumulative losses for producers and consumers would be as follows: feeder cattle producers--\$29.004 billion; fed

cattle producers--\$21.813 billion; and consumers--\$13.657 billion. Combined losses across all segments would exceed \$60 billion.

Loss of Privacy/Risk of Litigation: The proposed regulation requires packers to file copies of marketing arrangements with USDA. Packers may assert some information is confidential and request that it not be released. However, producers who are parties to the marketing arrangements would not have the same opportunity to claim privacy. This means confidential producer information could be posted on USDA's web site for producer competitors to view. The regulation would lessen the burden for bringing an action against a packer. Packer livestock purchase records likely would be a part of any litigation. Producers participating in questioned transactions likely would be drawn into the litigation.

Negative Restructuring of the Industry: I believe the potential elimination of marketing arrangements likely would encourage vertical integration. In order to satisfy consumer demand currently being met through the use of marketing arrangements, packers may choose to own livestock in larger numbers (today, packers directly own less than 5% of the market) rather than risk litigation.

While the regulation is couched in many legal terms and arguments, it would have a real impact on producers like me. Over the years, I have invested in genetics that have helped me improve the quality and consistency of the calves I produce. To capitalize on this investment, I retain ownership on my calves and feed them in a commercial feedyard. This allows me to market my calves through U.S. Premium Beef and other programs that allow me to earn premiums for my high quality cattle.

The proposed regulation would require purchasers of my cattle to justify paying more than a "standard price" for my livestock. What is a standard price and who sets it? The regulation seems to infer that to be the role of government. I strongly oppose the government setting "standard prices" for my livestock. If my competitors (other producers) don't agree with the justification the packer offers for not paying me a "standard price", the packer may be sued. Common business sense tells me that it wouldn't be long before the packer no longer would be interested in our agreement. This means I'll be back to selling cattle for the same average price as everyone else. My investment in superior genetics would be lost.

I believe the proposed rule will set the beef industry back to a time when all cattle received the same average price and beef demand was in a downward spiral. The rule also goes far beyond the intent of Congress. Members of this Committee will recall several of the proposals contained in this rule were either defeated or withdrawn during consideration of the last farm bill. We strongly urge you to take action to prevent the implementation of this rule.

I believe the best course of action to protect U.S. beef producers is to delete the language which led to the proposed GIPSA rule. To that end, I support language striking Sec. 11006, Part 1 of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008.

Livestock Ownership Restrictions

Another marketing related issue of concern is efforts to restrict packer ownership of livestock. I strongly oppose H.R. 4284 and its Senate companion, S. 2141. While the bills target packers, they could more accurately be described as restricting producers' choice of when to market their livestock. Study after study has shown packer ownership levels have no impact on market prices. In fact, the 2007 GIPSA study found limiting marketing opportunities in the beef industry would have significant negative effects for both producers and consumers.

I ask Members of this Committee to reject any attempt to include language such as that contained in H.R. 4284 in the next farm bill.

Country-of-Origin Labeling

The vast majority of beef producers have supported voluntary country-of-origin labeling (COOL) programs. These producers believe the market will provide the information and attributes consumers desire and are willing to pay to receive. The number of branded beef programs being utilized by beef producers is a testament to the signals provided by the market.

Despite broad beef industry opposition, the current mandatory COOL program was included in the last farm bill. Producer groups like KLA and NCBA actively engaged in the development of the regulation in an attempt to limit the record-keeping burden for the industry. While we believe the requirements of mandatory COOL have been relatively benign for most producers, the same cannot be said for all beef industry participants.

Last year, the World Trade Organization (WTO) ruled in favor of Canada and Mexico in their complaint against the U.S. mandatory COOL program. Although the U.S. Trade Representative has appealed the ruling, we believe the original decision is likely to stand.

It is in the interests of the U.S. as a whole, and the U.S. beef industry in particular, to resolve this dispute before retaliatory action is taken. Canada and Mexico are among the largest trading

partners for the U.S. In terms of exports, Canada and Mexico represent the number one and two destinations for U.S. beef products. In 2011, Canada and Mexico purchased more than \$2 billion worth of U.S. beef and beef products, nearly 40 percent of our total beef export value.

I strongly support the inclusion of language in the next farm bill to address the WTO finding. My preference would be language making the meat portion of the COOL program voluntary. An alternative approach would be to adopt the concept of substantial transformation wherein meat from any animal processed in the U.S. would be labeled as "Product of the U.S."

Conservation Title

Several conservation programs authorized in previous farm bills have played an important role in assisting farmers and ranchers enhance our nation's natural resources for food production, wildlife habitat, and water quality. In Kansas, the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) is improving habitat for grassland-nesting birds under consideration for listing as threatened or endangered species, enhancing the health of grazing lands, improving water quality near lakes used for public drinking water, improving soil quality, conserving groundwater and reducing soil erosion. In Fiscal Year 2010, our state NRCS personnel completed over 900 contracts impacting over 213,000 acres of our state's agricultural landscape. One important feature of EQIP has been its focus on livestock operations. I recommend a continued focus of 60% of EQIP funds toward livestock projects.

My personal experience with EQIP has been very positive. EQIP helped enable me to make the transition to no-till farming. The cost-share funds made it feasible for me to make the investment necessary to complete that transition. I know many similar stories where EQIP has facilitated operational changes that have positively impacted environmental quality.

Farm and Ranchland Protection Program and Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) conservation easements are in strong demand by our state's agricultural landowners who desire to sell their development rights to protect their lands for future generations of farmers and ranchers. In many instances, selling a conservation easement has been a helpful tool for estate and succession planning as today's landowners prepare for the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

Kansas leads the nation in the number of GRP agreements. To date this program has permanently protected over 36,000 acres of high-quality native grasslands, through 66 GRP conservation easements in Kansas. We realize GRP does not have baseline funding for the next farm bill, but we encourage Congress to reauthorize this program and give it favorable consideration for its share of funding.

I encourage Members of this Committee to remind your colleagues that Federal funds spent on conservation are a good investment in our country's natural resources and the ultimate beneficiary is the general public. In addition, conservation program spending is not an entitlement as participants are required to use these funds on the land and, in many instances, are required to invest their own time and personal funds as a match or cost-share contribution.

Conservation Easement Tax Incentive

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 included a provision to extend the income tax incentive for qualified conservation gifts, including donated conservation easements. This extension expired December 31, 2011.

I support making this incentive more permanent, as proposed in H.R. 1964, the Conservation Easement Incentive Act of 2011. This bipartisan bill is sponsored by 302 Members of the House, including several Members of this Committee. I encourage this Committee to consider including similar language in the next farm bill.

Research

My fellow cattle producers and I fully recognize the current economic situation facing the Federal Government and the need to reduce the Federal deficit. That said, I believe there are a number of programs worthy of continued funding in the farm bill. One area that plays a significant role in the livestock industry is the research title. Funding for livestock production research continually has declined since the 1970's. The beef industry does support increased funding for research on production practices, animal diseases, nutrition, food safety, and environmental impacts of the industry. Of these, the most critical programs administered by USDA are in the area of animal health.

I would encourage the Committee to closely look at this title and identify ways we might be able to do more with less to ensure the health of our U.S. beef herd. Finding ways to increase investment opportunities, whether through public or private partnerships, will be vital to the security and viability of our agricultural industry and food supply. As we look to further expand international trade opportunities, animal health issues will become even more important with our international trading partners. It is imperative that we

continue to invest in research on animal health issues to help U.S. producers remain competitive in the global marketplace.

Related to animal health research is the proposed National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) currently planned for construction in Manhattan, Kansas. NBAF will house research on important foreign animal diseases now being conducted at the aging facility on Plum Island. This research is essential to protecting U.S. livestock from potentially devastating diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease. Research scientists are close to developing several important vaccines that would mitigate the impact and help contain a foreign animal disease outbreak. It is important that research continues.

Due to the nature of the pathogens used in this research, the strictest and most modern bio-security and containment measures are necessary in this type of facility. Although the Plum Island facility has served its purpose well, it has reached its useful life. Given the importance of the research, it is imperative that development of a new facility move forward. We believe the Manhattan site is an appropriate location for the new facility given the proximity of the animal health corridor and the existing bio-security level 3 facility. We ask for the support of this Committee in moving forward with an appropriately designed and funded facility.

Government Mandates for Production Practices

Cattle producers recognize and respect their obligation to provide for the well-being and care of their cattle. It is my responsibility to raise my cattle in a humane and compassionate manner and I take that responsibility seriously. I am concerned with legislation that has been introduced in the House (H.R. 3798) that would require the Federal Government to dictate production practices for food producing animals. Knowing the intent of this bill is focused on the laying hen industry, I still have serious concerns about the precedent of the Federal Government getting in the business of telling producers how to raise their animals, taking the decision away from farmers and ranchers and the animal health professionals and animal scientists with whom they consult. I am concerned the legislation will stifle the scientific research and industry innovation that ultimately benefits animals. Prescriptive production mandates are a clear disincentive to continually improve our industries based on the latest science.

The World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) currently is developing international, species-specific standards for animal care. This process is guided by scientists and veterinary experts who have made the decision to move away from prescriptive housing requirements and instead have adopted outcome-based requirements. Current U.S. industry guidelines are science and outcome-based. We closely monitor each OIE guideline to ensure our industry standards remain consistent with any science-based OIE standards. I urge you and your colleagues to carefully evaluate the role of the Federal Government in determining animal production practices. I believe those decisions are best kept in the hands of the animal scientists, veterinarians, farmers and ranchers who care for these animals every day.

Animal Disease Traceability

The beef industry long has been supportive of animal identification for animal health purposes. We strongly believe the goal of any program should be to enable the cattle industry, state and Federal animal health officials to respond rapidly and effectively to animal health emergencies. We do appreciate APHIS recognizing the shortcomings of the previously proposed NAIS and that it had become a barrier to achieving meaningful animal disease traceability in the U.S.

The beef industry has advocated for a species specific and phased-in approach. The proposed Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) program does this with Phase 1 only applying to cattle more than 18 months of age. We look forward to an objective, robust assessment of Phase 1 before moving forward with inclusion of any cattle under 18 months in Phase 2. We are concerned as the proposed rule does not provide for a separate rulemaking process for Phase 2. We encourage APHIS to reevaluate how they plan to proceed for this age group and allow for a separate rulemaking. This group of cattle is much larger, more complex, and has increased logistical, technical and financial challenges for cattle producers and animal health officials.

We also are concerned USDA's cost-benefit analysis may be flawed and not adequately represent the total cost to the cattle industry for Phase 1 and especially for Phase 2 of the program. The beef industry consulted with agricultural economists who indicate there is not enough information provided for a separate cost/benefit analysis. Therefore we requested more information in order to adequately evaluate APHIS' economic analysis of the ADT rule.

Proposed On-Farm Child Labor Regulations

I am very concerned about the impact of recent proposed changes to on-farm child labor regulations. I applaud the Department of Labor's desire to enhance the safety of young people working on farms and ranches. A safe working environment is a primary concern of all farmers

and ranchers. However, I am concerned the proposed regulations will stifle the ability of young people to work in agriculture.

The list of prohibitions in the proposed rule is long and many are very vague or overly broad. Overly burdensome regulations often do more damage than good. I believe parents are better positioned to make decisions about the types of tasks assigned to young people on farms and ranches.

We need more, not fewer, opportunities for young people to learn about agriculture and the potential for a career in agriculture. Not to mention the responsibility and work ethic developed when working with livestock or caring for crops. I appreciate the support shown by Chairman Lucas and several Members of this Committee in sponsoring H.R. 4157, the Preserving America's Family Farms Act. I encourage every Member of this Committee to become a cosponsor of this bill.

Commodity Title

Finally, I would like to comment on the commodity title. Historically, the cattle industry has hesitated from weighing in on prospective title I programs. Recent proposals, however, including those made during negotiations on the Super Committee proposal, cause some concern.

Current commodity programs are relatively uniform, with each commodity crop participating in the direct payment, counter cyclical, marketing loan and crop insurance programs. Discussions that involve creating segmented commodity programs for individual crops pose a real threat to the livestock industry. Creating individual commodity programs increase the risk that farmers will fail to heed market signals and continue to grow crops in low demand and fail to increase production of crops in higher need.

In the next farm bill, it is crucial that commodity programs not pick winners and losers. While the structure of commodity programs may change, cattle producers urge Members of this Committee to maintain uniformity of programs across all commodities.

Conclusion

As you can see, the vast majority of cattle producers believe markets free from government interference best serve the beef industry. We prefer a farm bill that does not restrict our marketing options or distort market signals. We look forward to working with you as the next farm bill is developed.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Hodgson, you may begin when you're ready.

STATEMENT OF KENDALL HODGSON, WHEAT, SOYBEAN, CORN, SORGHUM,
ALFALFA, AND COW/CALF PRODUCER,
LITTLE RIVER, KS

Mr. Hodgson. Chairman Lucas, Representative Huelskamp, and Representative Conaway, thank you for coming here today. I appreciate your willingness to listen to what I and others would desire for a new farm bill.

My name is Kendall Hodgson and I live in central Kansas, near the town of Little River. I'm a fourth generation farmer and rancher. My great-grandfather homesteaded on the banks of the Little Arkansas River across from an Indian camp in 1871. I farmed for 33 years, first in partnership with my father and now with my wife. We have two boys in high school and a daughter in grade school, and I think every day of what I need to do to make it possible for any of them to continue to farm if they would so choose.

I operate a diversified farm, producing wheat, soybeans, grain sorghum, corn and alfalfa. I also operate a cow herd to give me something to do in the winter.

We are here today to visit about what would be an appropriate safety net for farmers in this area. It is my belief that farms are less able to withstand a total crop loss without some form of income today than they were in the past. In today's business environment, we cannot afford to stumble.

Our first priority should be a viable crop insurance program that covers not only a single year loss, such as last year's disastrous drought, but also multiple years of low production that caused declining APH's. Crop insurance may be our best tool, but it's not a perfect product. County T-yields are helpful, but sometimes they don't reflect what a producer and his lender would expect to produce in any given year.

Direct payments have been very beneficial to the Great Plains, but seem to have fallen out of favor with many groups, and they're an easy target for budget cutters. A possible alternative to direct payments could be some type of revenue product that is triggered when price times yield are below some threshold. It might make some sense to use an area, such as a

crop reporting district, to set these triggers. Farm level revenue is what we are actually most concerned about, but in reality, we have that with multi-peril crop insurance. Some form of area-wide program would be more budget friendly and give another layer of protection to production agriculture. The ACRE program seemed to have the right idea, but with a statewide trigger, really makes it unusable for the Great Plains area.

In any of these programs, I would ask that the Committee be mindful of WTO compliance. We think of ourselves as a nation of laws, and we really have more to lose by noncompliance than we have to gain. The payments to Brazil is the one that comes to my mind. It really is a black eye for our farm programs that only invite criticism from our detractors.

Conservation is something very near and dear to my operation. I realize I'm only on this Earth for a short time and I feel great responsibility to conserve those natural resources that I am privileged to manage, and I think this is a very appropriate rule for government to maintain the wealth of the nation in cooperation with those private operators.

I know that the CRP part of the conservation has and will have a role in protecting fragile lands, but I can also see in some instances that better farming techniques can make better use of that land. I'm skipping through my testimony here.

Conservation on working lands, in my opinion, is where the rubber should meet the road; again, in cooperation with the steward of the land, I think would have the most impact. Any system of production that leaks nutrients or soil out of it is not sustainable, and that, to my mind, is what conservation should be about.

Basic research is not part of this title I that we're talking about today, but it is of utmost importance to agriculture. Agriculture is a great success story. Let's not forget to keep funding the kind of research that keeps private and corporate entities--that private or corporate entities cannot justify to enable producers to be even more efficient in the future.

Another topic not in title I is trade promotion. These public and private shared funds have proven to be dollars well spent. Agricultural exports continue to be one of the shining stars in our balance of trade with other countries.

In summation, I would ask the Committee to please maintain the flexibility of a program that would be proposed to allow individuals who have different needs to have some benefit. I remember what it was like before Freedom To Farm, and I don't want to go back. I thank the Committee for the time, and would be happy to answer any questions they may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hodgson follows:]

Prepared Statement of Kendall Hodgson, Wheat, Soybean, Corn, Sorghum, Alfalfa, and Cow/Calf Producer, Little River, KS

Chairman Lucas, Ranking Member Peterson, and Members of the Committee I appreciate your willingness to come to Kansas today to hear what I and others would desire for a new farm bill.

My name is Kendall Hodgson and I live in central Kansas near the town of Little River. I am a fourth generation farmer and rancher. My Great Grandfather homesteaded on the banks of the Little Arkansas River across from an Indian camp in 1871. I have farmed for 33 years, first as a partner with my Father and then as a sole proprietor with my wife when he was no longer able to get around. We have two boys in High School and a daughter in grade school and I think every day what I need to do to make it possible for any of them to continue to farm if they so chose.

I operate a diversified farm, producing wheat, soybeans, grain sorghum, corn and alfalfa. I also operate a cow herd that gives me something to do in the winter.

We are here today to visit about what would make an adequate safety net for farmers in this area. It is my belief that farms are less able to withstand a total crop loss without some income today than they were in the past. In today's business environment we cannot afford to stumble.

Our first priority should be to maintain a viable Crop Insurance program that covers not only single year losses such as last year's disastrous drought but also multiple years of low production which will cause declining APH's (average production history's). Crop Insurance in one of the best tools we have to keep us whole in the bad years as well as helping us market our crops prior to harvest with more confidence when it makes sense to do so. Crop insurance may be our best tool but it is not a perfect product. Any crop insurance product needs to have plugs to fill the multiple years of low yields that can and will occur

in this part of the country. One suggestion I have heard is to have better methodology to the formation of APH's. County T-yields are helpful but sometimes don't reflect what a producer and his lender would expect to produce in any given year. The closer to the individual farm those expectations can be formulated the better.

Direct Payments have been very beneficial to the Great Plains area but seem to have fallen out of favor with many groups and are an easy target for budget cutters. A possible alternative to Direct Payments could be some type of revenue product that is triggered when price times yield are below some threshold. It might make sense to use some area such as a crop reporting district to set these triggers. Farm level revenue is what we are most concerned about but in reality if we have that with multi peril crop insurance. Some form of area wide revenue program would be more budget friendly and would give another layer of protection to production agriculture. The ACRE program seems to have the right idea but by having a statewide trigger makes it unusable for the Great Plains area. I like to point out that there is more variability in environment from the western border of Kansas to the eastern border of Kansas that there is from the eastern border of Kansas to the East Coast.

In any of these programs I would ask the Committee to be mindful of WTO compliance. We like to think of ourselves as a nation that follows the law. We stand to lose more by noncompliance than to gain. I understand the realities of the Brazilian threat of a WTO suit concerning our cotton program and our subsequent payments to Brazil to keep that suit from happening but this is something of a black eye for our farm programs that only invite criticism from our detractors.

Conservation is something that is near and dear to my operation. I realize that I am on this Earth only a short time and I feel a great responsibility to conserve the natural resources I that am privileged to manage. This is a very appropriate role for government to maintain the wealth of the nation in cooperation with the private operators on the land.

I know that CRP has and will have a role in protecting fragile lands but I also can see that with better farming techniques we can make better use of some of that land. 21 years ago I spent a month in India and to see how they scrambled for every bit of land to grow something on was quite a contrast to our government paying us to not produce. I fully realize that we are not India nor would I want us to be but I can see the need in the future to put lands where appropriate back into production.

Conservation on working lands in cooperation with the steward of the land would have the most impact of any conservation program. Preserving our natural resources by not only keeping the soil on the land where it ought to be, but by preventing excess nutrients and crop production chemicals from going down the river is our ultimate goal. A system of production that leaks either soil or nutrients out of it is not sustainable.

Basic research may not be part of the title I portion of the farm bill that we are discussing here today but I would be remiss if I did not remind the Committee that modern agriculture is a great success story. We produce far more with fewer resources that at any time in history. We didn't get here by accident. Let us not forget to keep funding the kind of research that private or corporate entities can't justify that will enable producers to be even more efficient in the future.

Another topic that may not be in title I is trade promotion. These public-private shared funds have been proven to be dollars well spent. Agricultural exports continue to be one of the shining stars in our balance of trade with other countries. Exports also help relieve the burdens of abundant productions that we have endured in the past.

In summation I would ask the Committee to please maintain the flexibility of any program that would be proposed to allow individuals who have different needs to see some benefit.

I thank the Committee for their time and would happy to answer any questions they may have.

Kendall Hodgson.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Giessel, you may begin when you're ready.

STATEMENT OF THOMAS "TOM" GERARD GIESSEL, WHEAT, CORN,
SORGHUM, SOYBEAN, ALFALFA, AND COW/CALF
PRODUCER, LARNED, KS

Mr. Giessel. Chairman Lucas, Representative Huelskamp, and Representative Conaway, thank you for the opportunity to share what I think are the most important issues to consider in the next farm bill.

My name is Tom Giessel. I'm a fourth generation family farmer from Pawnee County, Kansas. My brother Jay and I raise winter wheat, grain sorghum, corn and alfalfa, and a small percentage of the land is irrigated. We formerly had a cow/calf herd as well. I'm a member of five cooperatives and Kansas Farmers Union, and participate in several other farm and rural organizations. I've taken an active interest in farm policy since 1975.

One of the foregone conclusions of the farm policy debate is that direct payments will not be part of the next farm bill. While I understand the concerns that many farms have with the end of this support, the experience I've had on my farm shows that the fixed payments don't amount to that much. Last year I received about \$10 per acre through direct payments. Just in fertilizer alone, I spent over \$220 an acre preparing irrigated corn for planting this year. These costs might make direct payments seem insignificant, but I would much rather see the \$10 an acre be used to support programs that will kick in when I really need it. The loss of direct payments is overblown and I encourage the Committee to find a way to provide assistance when it's actually needed.

There has been much discussion about crop insurance as the base of the next farm bill. That makes sense. Just about all crop insurance products work very well when prices are high. However, when prices return to normal times, crop insurance may not be as appealing. From my perspective as a crop farmer, I have seen relatively few high price spikes and rarely was in a position to take advantage of them. In my 37 years of farming, I have rarely sold \$5 wheat and \$4 corn. When prices are low, which are more common than when prices high, a revenue product that doesn't provide much help will not be attractive. Because of this, crop insurance should not be the only component of the next farm bill. Farmers need a safety net that works in time of need; not just all the time.

I appreciate that there are limited budgets and limited appetite for farm payments. While many of the proposals of the farm bill commodity title try to solve the problem presented by shallow or deep losses that might not otherwise be covered by crop insurance, none of them address the prolonged market failures, either very low or, actually, very high prices. The Committee should be proactive in finding a solution that addresses these realities.

I support the Market-Driven Inventory System, or I'll use the acronym, MDIS, which is voluntary farmer-owned and will allow commodity markets to work better. MDIS takes the tops off the peaks and fills the valleys. It dampens the volatility, so it's not damaging all sectors of ag--that is so damaging to some sectors of agriculture.

A study by the University of Tennessee found that between 1998 and 2010, government spending on direct and countercyclical payments and disaster programs was \$152 billion. With MDIS, it would have been only \$56 billion, a savings of nearly almost \$100 billion. With MDIS, net farm income averaged only slightly lower, which is impressive, considering the savings and the effective safety net provided by the program. MDIS will reduce price volatility, which helps farmers, livestock producers, biofuels industry, consumers, and the hungry around the world. MDIS will also make sure that farmers receive the bulk of their revenue, even in some tough times, from the market and not the mailbox. I urge you to consider the Market-Driven Inventory System as a farm program that will function as a true safety net.

As a rural resident, I understand the importance of delivery of these farm programs. It is essential that farmers and ranchers have access to FSA and other USDA agency offices. I also encourage the Committee to push for greater autonomy and authority for FSA County Committees to meet the needs of farmers in their local areas.

Additionally, I know that regulations have been discussed at length by this Committee. I agree that farmers should be able to operate their enterprise without much trouble from anyone. Nonetheless, I cannot think of a single one of my neighbors who have gone out of business because of too much regulation. I can, however, point to many that have had to sell their farm or their cow herd because of under enforcement of antitrust laws, manipulation of commodity markets, and other lax protection from those of greater power than the farmer.

My final thought would be on conservation, and for me, conservation must be more than just a title on a farm bill. You know, starting with about the 1996 Farm Bill, farmers have been

encouraged to try to grow two blades of grass where only one has grown before. All our production is costly in so many ways. Specifically, it drains resources; resources that we are borrowing from future generations. Conservation is an ethic; an ethic which farm policy should be built around.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my ideas and I'll answer questions at the appropriate time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Giessel follows:]

Prepared Statement of Thomas "Tom" Gerard Giessel, Wheat, Corn, Sorghum, Soybean, Alfalfa, and Cow/Calf Producer, Larned, KS

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you the important issues, as I see them, for Congress to consider in the next farm bill. My name is Tom Giessel and I'm a fourth-generation family farmer from Pawnee County, Kansas. My brother Jay and I raise winter wheat, grain sorghum, corn, and alfalfa, with a small percentage of the land irrigated. We formerly had a cow/calf herd as well. I'm a member of five cooperatives as well as Kansas Farmers Union, and participate in several other farm and rural organizations. I have taken an active interest in farm policy, especially since 1975, and have followed the ebb and flow of concepts to ensure that family farmers, ranchers and rural America have an opportunity to thrive.

I know that today's budget environment is challenging, but I also understand that tomorrow's budget situation is not likely to be any more favorable. The agriculture community has been clear in saying it is willing to bear its fair share of cuts in order to contribute toward deficit reduction, but they must be proportional to cuts in other sectors. I respectfully urge Members of the Committee to consider the critical and tenuous nature of our nation's food security when considering the next farm bill. Production agriculture is a primary economic driver, and as such, when production agriculture prospers, a multiplier effect results and jobs and tax revenues at the local, state, and national levels are added without raising tax rates. Spending reductions that adversely impact the productivity and profitability of production agriculture are counterproductive to our overall national economic interests. Family farmer- and rancher-owned and operated food, fuel, and fiber production is the most economically, socially and environmentally beneficial way to meet the needs of our nation.

Our national farm and food policy affects all Americans, urban and rural, food producers and food consumers. We have the opportunity to shape this important policy only once every few years. Our nation's family farmers, who are those most vulnerable to risk, need an effective and fiscally responsible safety net to mitigate the effects of weather and market volatility in order to achieve our food and energy security goals and to preserve jobs in rural America. As the Members of the Committee know, agriculture is an industry that is very different from any other, with market behavior that defies typical supply and demand economics, high input costs, and the constant risk of weather disasters threatening our nation's producers. Farmers should not receive support in the good times, but farm policy should instead provide economic security to farmers, who have little market power, in bad times. Our nation's farmers need a more effective and fiscally responsible safety net to mitigate the effects of weather and market volatility and to achieve our food and energy security goals.

Additional Farm Bill Priorities

Congress should continue investments in rural America through farm bill conservation and energy programs. Demand for these initiatives remains high and yet these programs are chronically under-funded in the annual appropriations process, which results in program backlogs. Congress should provide a flexible conservation toolbox in the 2012 Farm Bill that includes streamlined program delivery for working lands, land retirement and easement programs, coupled with significant Federal funding and flexible local planning authorities.

Additionally, the 2008 Farm Bill included language that established and continued important research, animal health, marketing, and disaster programs related to livestock production, which brought additional interests into the farm bill process. The livestock title mandated country-of-origin labeling (COOL) for meat, fish, perishable agricultural commodities, and assorted other food products, which has been a long awaited and very beneficial law for farmers and consumers alike. A livestock title should be a part of the 2012 Farm Bill and must maintain the progress established by the previous farm bill.

National nutrition policy must address both the quantity and quality of food available to needy Americans, and nutrition programs should place an emphasis on fresh and local food to ensure that Americans of all income levels have access to healthy, nutritious foods. The local food procurement directive of the 2008 Farm Bill must be continued and further emphasized in the 2012 Farm Bill, and further incentives should be provided for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

Program (SNAP) and other Federal nutrition program recipients to use their benefits at farmers markets, achieving dual objectives of providing healthy food to those who need it most and supporting family farmers and ranchers.

Market-Driven Inventory System: An Overview

In 2011, a study by University of Tennessee's Agricultural Policy Analysis Center (APAC), under the leadership of Dr. Daryll E. Ray, director, and Dr. Harwood Schaffer, research assistant professor, developed a farm program concept that would moderate extreme volatility in commodity markets while allowing farmers to receive their income from the marketplace rather than from government payments, saving the Federal Government a significant amount of money in the process.

The Market-Driven Inventory System (MDIS) developed by Dr. Ray is an agricultural commodity program that mitigates price volatility, providing advantages to livestock producers, the biofuels industry, and to hungry people in this country and around the world. In addition, it would reduce government expenses, increase the value of crop exports, and maintain net farm income over time. The central feature of MDIS is a voluntary, farmer-owned and market-driven inventory system that operates under market forces during normal conditions but moderates prices at the extremes. Inventory stocks activity would only be activated when crop prices become so low or so high that normally profitable agricultural firms are not provided with reasonable investment and production signals. By working with the market, MDIS would ensure that farmers receive their income from the market instead of from government payments.

In the wake of the extreme commodity price volatility seen from 2006 to 2010, many of our international counterparts have revitalized, constructed or made plans for a grain inventory management system on a national level. The international community has also of late called for the establishment of a global "virtual" internationally coordinated reserve system for humanitarian purposes," first mentioned in the G8 Leaders' Statement on Global Food Security at the Hokkaido Toyako Summit on July 8, 2008, and more recently at the November 2011 G20 summit in Cannes, France.

This two-phase study found that MDIS can provide the functions sought by American family farmers and ranchers and our international brothers and sisters. The first portion of the study (Phase I) is a rerun of history from 1998 to 2010 with one change: the commodity programs during that period are replaced with MDIS. The second (Phase II) uses the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) 10 year baseline released in February 2012 as the starting point for the analysis. Because 10 year-ahead baseline projections lack real world variability, a pattern of shocks that roughly mimic the variability experienced by crop agriculture from 1998 to 2010 were imposed on the projections.

The POLYSYS simulation model, developed by APAC, is the analytical model used in this analysis. POLYSYS simulates changes in policy instrument levels and/or economic situations as variation away from a baseline situation. Crop allocation decisions are made with linear programming models using county-level data as a proxy for farm-level decisions. The crop prices and demands as well as all livestock variables are estimated at the national level. National estimates of revenues, costs and net returns are also estimated.

MDIS Phase I: A Historical Analysis

Phase I explores the extremely volatile commodity price period between 1998 and 2010 using historical data as the baseline. In this portion of the analysis, the actual historical supply, demand and price numbers are compared with what those numbers are estimated to have been had MDIS been in effect.

During the 1998 to 2010 time period, actual government payments for the eight program crops (corn, wheat, soybeans, grain sorghum, barley, oats, cotton and rice) totaled \$152.2 billion, excluding crop insurance premium subsidy payments. If MDIS had been in place during this time, farmers would have received \$56.4 billion from the government (in storage payments), while earning roughly the same net farm income over the period as historically received (figures 1 and 2). With MDIS in effect, annual net farm income would have been, on average, higher in the early part of the period (1998 to 2005) and lower in the latter part of the period (2006 to 2010) but for the full 13 years under MDIS, net farm income averaged only slightly lower (\$51.1 billion versus \$52.1 billion). MDIS would have proven to provide an effective safety net for farmers, remove the volatility from the commodity market and reduce government payments by approximately 2/3.

Figure 1: Government Payments for 8 Crops: 1998-2010

[GRAPHIC(S) NOT AVAILABLE IN TIFF FORMAT]

Fig. 1 compares the Federal cost of the farm bill programs that were implemented from 1998 to 2010 to the cost of MDIS if it had been in place during this time frame. The analysis found that, had MDIS been implemented instead of the farm bill programs that were in place, the Federal Government would have saved more than \$95 billion over the 13 year period.

Figure 2: Realized Net Farm Income, 1998-2010

[GRAPHIC(S) NOT AVAILABLE IN TIFF FORMAT]

Fig. 2 compares net farm income from the farm programs that were implemented from 1998 to 2010 to what net farm income would have been had MDIS been in place during this time frame. The analysis found that net farm income would have remained virtually unchanged over the 13 year period.

For the entire 13 year period, the value of production under the baseline policies was \$413 billion while with MDIS it would have been \$446 billion--a difference of \$2.6 billion per year. Crop prices were significantly higher under MDIS in the early part of the period, and for the full 1998 to 2010 period prices were higher by \$0.25, \$0.50 and \$1.00 per bushel for corn, wheat and soybeans, respectively, compared to actual prices.

Had MDIS or a similar inventory-based commodity program been in effect from 1998 to 2010, the value of crop exports would have exceeded the actual value of exports during that period (figure 3). A higher crop price does cause a reduction in the quantity exported, but that decline is less than the increase in price. As a result, the value of exports increases with rising prices and decreases with price declines. As an aside, this property does not bode well for the future direction of the change in value of agricultural exports over the next few years if prices decline.

Figure 3: Annual Value of Exports for 8 Crops (1998-2010)

[GRAPHIC(S) NOT AVAILABLE IN TIFF FORMAT]

Fig. 3 compares the historic export value of the eight program crops from 1998 to 2010 to their value if MDIS had been in place during this time frame. The analysis found that, had MDIS been implemented instead of the farm bill programs that were in place, the export value of the eight program crops would have been greater over the 13 year period.

MDIS Phase II: Future Projections

Phase II is based on USDA baseline projection data for 2012 to 2021 as the beginning point of the analysis, but production shocks were used to mimic the variability that crop and livestock agriculture experienced between 1998 and 2010. Crop yields ten percent above the baseline for the eight major crops for the 2012 through 2014 crop years were imposed, and in the 2017 and 2018 crop years a ten percent decrease below baseline yields was used, along with a five percent decline in 2019. The purpose of these yield shocks was to reproduce price conditions similar to those that were seen in 1998 through 2010--a timeframe that saw both low prices accompanied by massive government payments and record high prices. The resulting comparisons below are between this shocked baseline assuming continuation of current commodity programs and the MDIS alternative. The MDIS simulation includes the same production shocks.

Government payments with a continuation of the current programs and shocked production total \$65 billion over the 10 years from 2012 to 2021. With MDIS in place, government payments are estimated to total \$26 billion, or 60 percent less (figure 4).

Figure 4: Government Payments for 8 Crops: 2010-2021

[GRAPHIC(S) NOT AVAILABLE IN TIFF FORMAT]

Fig. 4 compares the projected Federal cost if current farm programs are extended to the projected net farm income under MDIS from 2010 to 2021 under three scenarios. First, if current

programs are extended and annual values match USDA's baseline projections; second, if current programs are extended and supply/demand shocks are felt (as described earlier in the document), and; third, if supply/demand shocks occur but MDIS programs are in place. The analysis projects that government payments would be \$39 billion lower if MDIS is implemented rather than extending current programs.

Net farm incomes averaged over the 10 years are nearly identical--\$79.2 billion per year under the current programs and slightly higher with MDIS, \$79.6 billion (figure 5).

Figure 5: Realized Net Farm Income, 2010-2021

[GRAPHIC(S) NOT AVAILABLE IN TIFF FORMAT]

Fig. 5 compares the projected net farm income if current farm programs are extended to the projected net farm income under MDIS from 2010 to 2021 under three scenarios. First, if current programs are extended and annual values match USDA's baseline projections; second, if current programs are extended and supply/demand shocks are felt (as described earlier in the document), and; third, if supply/demand shocks occur but MDIS programs are in place. The analysis projects that net farm income would be slightly higher under MDIS than under current programs in either scenario.

Because crop prices average higher with MDIS than under the current program, the value of exports over the 10 year period is higher with MDIS by \$15 billion, or \$1.5 billion per year, on average (more in the first part of the period and less in the latter part of the period) (figure 6).

Figure 6: Value of Exports--8 Crops, 2010-2021

[GRAPHIC(S) NOT AVAILABLE IN TIFF FORMAT]

Fig. 6 compares the projected export value of the eight program crops from 2010 to 2021 to their projected value if MDIS is in place during this time frame. The analysis projects that, if MDIS is implemented instead of extending the current farm bill programs, the export value of the eight program crops would be \$15 billion more over the study period.

MDIS: Mechanics

For Phase I, the beginning corn loan rate is halfway between the variable cost of producing a bushel of corn and the corresponding total production cost. In 1998 that number is computed to be \$2.27 per bushel of corn. The 1998 loan rates for other crops are then computed to be in the same proportion to corn loan rates as those legislated by the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform (FAIR) Act of 1996 (the 1996 Farm Bill) in order to minimize distortion, except for grain sorghum, for which the loan rate is raised to be equal to that of corn, and soybeans, for which the loan rate is raised to \$6.32. The loan rates of all crops are adjusted for 1999 through 2010 using USDA's prices-paid-by-farmers chemical input index.

The analysis for Phase II of the study follows the approach and most of the basic specifications used for Phase I. The loan rates for this analysis (all in dollars per bushel) are: \$3.50 for corn, grain sorghum and barley, \$2.49 for oats, \$5.28 for wheat and \$8.97 for soybeans. The loan rates have the same proportion to corn as the loan rates in the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill). Loan rates are held constant for the full 2012 to 2020 period.

The maximum quantities of grain allowed in the MDIS inventory in both Phase I and Phase II are specified to be 3 billion bushels of corn, 800 million bushels of wheat and 400 million bushels of soybeans. Inventory maximum levels for other program crops would be set as appropriate. Farmers with MDIS recourse loans are paid \$0.40 per bushel per year to store the grain and are required to keep the grain in condition.

With MDIS in operation, markets work uninterrupted until prices are estimated to fall below a recourse loan rate or, if MDIS inventory is available, prices exceed 160 percent of the loan rate.

When prices fall below the loan rate, the model estimates the amount of grain that farmers would need to put under recourse loan with

the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to raise the market price to or above the loan rate, which is the "price" that FSA uses to value the grain used as collateral for the loan. If a market price is estimated to exceed 160 percent of the loan rate, the model checks to see if there is an inventory stock in the MDIS farmer-owned inventory. If MDIS inventory is available, the model computes the quantity needed to lower price to about 160 percent of the loan rate and allows that amount of stock onto the market. Setting the release price at 160 percent of the loan rate is the key to establishing a functional system. The market does not work as effectively within the model at higher or lower loan rate-release price ratios.

The grain under MDIS must stay in inventory, that is, it cannot be redeemed by paying off the loan and marketed until the price goes above the release price of 160 percent of the loan rate and notification is specifically received. With MDIS in effect, all government payment programs (countercyclical payments, loan deficiency payments, fixed or direct payments, etc.), except MDIS inventory storage payments and crop insurance subsidies, are eliminated for corn, grain sorghum, oats, barley, wheat, and soybeans. An optional set-aside would be available for use at the Secretary's discretion if MDIS inventory maximums are reached and prices fell below loan rates. Rice and cotton are not included in MDIS and are assured to remain eligible for current program payments.

History of Commodity Programs--How Did We Get Here?

With the adoption of the FAIR Act of 1996, which extended the marketing loan program to all crops, the holding of grains either by the Commodity Credit Corporation or farmers in a farmer-owned reserve was made ineffective. Part of the logic behind the end of these grain storage programs was the belief that if there were a need for stocks, participants in the commercial sector would buy up those stocks at a low price and later sell them at a higher price with no cost to the government. Recent history has demonstrated that those commercial inventories simply did not come into existence and the market has seen numerous countries impose harmful export limitations of their domestically produced foodstuffs in the face of citizen concern over food shortages. In the U.S., we have even heard concerns from the livestock sector over the availability of sufficient feed supplies.

The 1996 Farm Bill instead established the present system of direct and countercyclical payments. Almost immediately after the 1996 bill, the market changed and commodities prices began to decline. From 1996 until 2004, the value of agricultural exports fell from an all time high of \$27.3 billion to \$10.5 billion.¹ From 1996 until 2005, corn prices fell to an average of \$2.06 per bushel, wheat an average of \$3.03 per bushel and soybeans an average of \$5.33 per bushel.² The elimination of reserves and new incentives to plant program acres combined to result in widespread overproduction, devalued crop prices and thus an increase in the amount paid in government subsidies. The resulting system had no way to moderate wild swings in supply and market volatility that has proven detrimental not only to family farmers but also to consumers in developing countries, industries dependent upon agricultural commodities for inputs and rural economies.

¹ Jerardo, Alberto. February 2004. "The U.S. Trade Balance . . . More Than Just a Number." U.S. Department of Agriculture-Economic Research Service.

² Ray, Daryll, et. al. March 2012. "An Analysis of a Market Driven Inventory System (MDIS)" University of Tennessee Agricultural Policy Analysis Center.

In times of high commodity prices, such as current market conditions, target prices are set so low that even in the case of a market downturn, the countercyclical program does not reflect the rising cost of production or provide an adequate safety net. Direct payments are increasingly indefensible to the public and unnecessary for farmers, as they get distributed based on historic production, regardless of current market price.

As a result, from 1998 to 2010, government payments for crops totaled \$152.2 billion.³ If MDIS had been in place for corn, wheat and soybeans between 1998 and 2010, government payments to farmers would have been reduced by nearly $\frac{2}{3}$ to \$56.4 billion, the value of exports would have increased, average commodity prices for farmers would have been higher, damaging price volatility would have been substantially reduced and overall farm income would have been left effectively unchanged.⁴

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

MDIS and the Federal Deficit

As Congress continues to seek ways to reduce the Federal deficit,

any serious discussion regarding controlling government expenditures should include MDIS. APAC's analysis over the 10 years from 2012 to 2021 found that government payments with a continuation of the current program and shocked production remain unsustainably high, totaling \$65 billion. However, with MDIS in place, estimated government payments over the same period total \$26 billion, a 60 percent reduction (figure 4).⁵

⁵ Ray, Daryll, et. al. March 2012. "An Analysis of a Market Driven Inventory System (MDIS)" University of Tennessee Agricultural Policy Analysis Center.

MDIS could save tens of billions of dollars paid under existing government payment programs and the additional tens of billions in "emergency" payments and government subsidies to revenue insurance programs otherwise needed to offset the almost inevitable periodic severe collapses in grain prices. Under MDIS, grain farmers receive their income from the market and grain demanders are not subsidized or overcharged.

Permanent Disaster Programs

The unpredictability and inefficiencies associated with ad hoc disaster programs led to the inclusion of the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE) and other related programs, such as the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP), the Livestock Indemnity Program, and more, in the 2008 Farm Bill. These permanent disaster programs were intended to allow farmers and ranchers to recover quickly from devastating weather without waiting for piecemeal disaster assistance. Unfortunately, that set of programs was inadequately funded and oversight challenges postponed many of the rules and regulations needed to implement the programs. Even in 2010, there were farmers still awaiting their claims for 2007 losses. SURE and similar initiatives were a hard-won victory for family farmers and ranchers and those programs' guiding principles--to protect farmers against catastrophic yield losses--ought to be included and appropriately implemented in the next farm bill.

In the next farm bill, permanent disaster programs must be funded at a level that makes them effective and eliminates the need for ad hoc payments. Partial advance payments should be made available so that assistance can be quickly provided in times of desperate need. Decision makers must ensure that we can continue the work that was done with SURE and other programs in 2008. Returning to a system of ad hoc disaster programs is likely to be much more costly for both the Federal Government and for farmers. Not only are ad hoc programs expensive, but they are also difficult to administer, extremely political, and not solely influenced by real conditions and/or need. Between 1996 and 2002, when the commodity title was removed from the farm bill, approximately \$30 billion was spent on ad hoc disaster programs.⁶ The cost to extend SURE and similar disaster assistance programs for 5 years in a 2012 Farm Bill is projected to be \$8.9 billion,⁷ and baseline funding for the permanent disaster programs expired in 2011. It should also be noted that any disaster program would likely be less costly if the MDIS concept were also included in the next farm bill.⁸

⁶ USDA Economic Research Service, retrieved from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/FarmIncome/FinfidmuXls.htm>.

⁷ Congressional Budget Office.

⁸ Ray, Daryll, et. al. March 2012. "An Analysis of a Market Driven Inventory System (MDIS)" University of Tennessee Agricultural Policy Analysis Center.

Even though permanent disaster programs were enacted in the 2008 Farm Bill, ad hoc disaster relief efforts were authorized in 2010. This is likely due to the fact that SURE and the other programs were not as effective or fast-moving enough to satisfy the needs of farmers who were affected by disaster. If disaster programs were strengthened, these legislative solutions would likely be unnecessary. It should also be kept in mind that disaster programs are among the few farm bill programs that provide roughly equal benefits to both farmers and ranchers. Including a set of previously unaffected sectors of agriculture in Federal farm policy would generate more support for the overall farm bill.

It is important that farmers do their part by responsibly sharing in the inherent business risks of their farm. The distribution of disaster aid must remain linked to crop insurance participation, and SURE participants should be required to purchase more than just catastrophic (CAT) coverage so that they are able to reasonably recover some of their losses through crop insurance.

Any improvements in disaster programs should not come at the expense of program delivery. County FSA staff who service these programs are pushed to the limits of their resources as it is, and

their offices need adequate funding and modern technology in order to continue to serve our country's farmers. A consistent, predictable and stable backup plan for farmers struck by weather-related problems is the most important benefit of having a permanent disaster aid program. Any efforts to improve upon it should not interrupt the positive results SURE and other disaster programs provided.

Risk Management

Crop insurance is an important safety net mechanism that provides assistance to farmers only when assistance is needed. It is fully compatible with MDIS and, as such, crop insurance must remain a cornerstone of farm policy. Risk management tools must be made economical for all farmers, regardless of crop or geographic region, and more insurance products should be made available that protect against changes in the cost of production. Farmers also need protection against losses due to weather-related disasters, high input costs or devastatingly low prices. There should also be efforts aimed at streamlining and eliminating duplication among existing farm bill programs. Risk management provisions in the next farm bill should extend the availability and affordability of Federal Crop Insurance Programs to farmers in portions of the country that have not historically carried significant levels of crop insurance, thereby reducing the need for disaster aid.

I support the reestablishment of compliance requirements for Federal crop insurance eligibility so that all existing or new crop and revenue insurance or other risk management programs are subject to all conservation compliance provisions.

Crop insurance coverage should be improved for organic producers, including ending the existing surcharge on organic policies and the full implementation of coverage levels based on organic prices. Additionally, crop insurance products and other risk management tools should be developed for specialty crop producers. Funding levels for crop insurance must remain adequate as it is the most critical and effective safety net for farmers and crop insurance has already been subjected to recent significant cuts.

Recent budget cuts to crop insurance, which subtracted from the farm bill baseline, were made since the last farm bill. We urge lawmakers to carefully consider the effects of reduced funding for crop insurance programs. Cuts should not come at the expense of greatly increased risk management costs for farmers. Continued vigilance should be maintained to prevent the abuse of crop insurance programs, but crop insurance must remain a part of the next farm bill. Costs associated with the Federal Crop Insurance Program have risen as crop insurance has taken on additional importance in the suite of safety net tools in the farm bill. Although costs have increased over the long run, total costs of the crop insurance program were cut nearly in half between 2008 and 2010. Most of the savings came from reductions in net indemnities, although reductions to administration and overhead subsidies for approved insurance providers have made for decreased spending as well.

There are also a few adjustments to the mechanisms of the crop insurance programs that should be considered. All risk management programs should be based upon Actual Production History (APH), and for situations that the APH is not available, the qualified yield for a farm should not be set at a lower level than that of county FSA calculations. In order to protect farmers in the event of successive crop disasters, we also urge the establishment of APH yield floors. These common sense approaches to crop insurance will help to ensure that losses are accurately reflected in indemnities.

Crop insurance is not the be-all and end-all for a farm safety net. Without reducing the volatility that plagues agriculture commodity markets with MDIS, revenue-based crop insurance products will be extremely expensive in high price periods and will provide little, if any, assistance to farmers when prices collapse. Farmers would much rather see a farm policy that also includes MDIS and disaster assistance programs to moderate the volatility of the agricultural marketplace and yields so that farmers can continue to farm.

MDIS Benefits Stakeholders

MDIS holds numerous benefits for a variety of stakeholders, including farmers, the environment, livestock producers, the ethanol industry, taxpayers and the food insecure worldwide.

MDIS Benefits Farmers

MDIS helps smooth out some of the wild price swings that can put some farmers out of business. By providing a greater level of income certainty, MDIS helps farmers plan for the future without decreasing farm income. Land prices and input costs rise dramatically when commodity prices rise, but when prices drop, these costs do not drop correspondingly. With a reasonable loan rate, farmers could make long-term investments in their farming operation that improve their long-term profitability.

Farmers who put their corn, wheat and/or soybeans into the

inventory system would benefit from the receipt of storage payments. They would also benefit from the future sale of their stored commodity at the higher release price. With MDIS in effect, annual net farm income was higher, on average, in the early part of the period from 1998 to 2005 and lower in the latter part of the period from 2006 to 2010, but for the full 13 years, the MDIS net farm income averaged only slightly lower (\$51.1 billion versus \$52.1 billion). The low-price years would reduce the tendency to capitalize higher returns into land. While sufficient to keep current land in production, the moderated prices do not provide the kind of price signals that would lead to an over-expansion of productive capacity and lower prices over the longer term. Net farm incomes averaged over the 10 years are almost identical (\$79.2 billion per year under the current program and slightly higher with MDIS at \$79.6 billion). From 1998 to 2010, farmers would have benefited from price signals that more accurately reflect the supply/demand situation at a given time, than when futures prices reflect herd-following speculative behavior on the part of some market participants.

MDIS Benefits Conservation

MDIS holds significant conservation benefits because price stability puts less pressure on environmentally sensitive land. During high price years, for example, demand pressures on land is reduced because farmers will not be incentivized to break native grassland or bring Conservation Reserve Program acres back into crop production. During low price years, net farm income would remain higher under MDIS. This means that farmers have more money to invest in conservation in order to meet their cost-share requirements under programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

MDIS Benefits Livestock Producers

Less volatile commodity prices under MDIS help livestock producers keep input costs more stable and help prevent skyrocketing grain prices, which can bankrupt livestock producers. In the 2006 to 2010 period, higher prices put some producers over the financial edge; however, MDIS would have reduced commodity prices to a more reasonable and survivable level. Livestock producers are vulnerable to rapidly increasing feed prices, which they cannot quickly pass on to the consumer. Overall, MDIS would have provided livestock producers and industrial users with security in the availability of feed supplies and a more reasonable range of prices.

MDIS Benefits the Ethanol Industry

Abnormally high commodity prices are also damaging to the ethanol industry and can cause disruptions in the supply chain. Having access to a stable supply within a more predictable price range allows ethanol producers to engage in long-range planning. MDIS decreases price fluctuation faced by ethanol plants and ensures more stable production, which in turn helps put America on the road to energy independence.

MDIS Benefits Taxpayers

Throughout the study period, government payments for crops totaled \$152.2 billion. Had MDIS been in place from 1998 to 2010 rather than the existing programs, taxpayers could have saved more than \$95 billion compared to what the Federal Government actually spent on farm programs. This is a nearly 60 percent reduction in expenditures. Government payments with a continuation of the current programs and shocked production total \$65 billion over the 10 years from 2012 to 2021; with MDIS the estimated cost is \$26 billion, also a 60 percent reduction.

Equally important, MDIS addresses perceptions among some consumers that the government is giving unwarranted handouts to farmers. By setting up a system that allows the price to range closer to costs of production, these policies allocate the costs to the major users of commodities, both domestic and international, rather than expecting the U.S. Federal Government to subsidize their purchases. In addition to the benefits they would receive under MDIS as taxpayers, U.S. consumers would benefit from more stable commodity prices that would reduce the volatility of food costs. While commodity prices under MDIS increased in the 1998 to 2005 period according to the model, the farm portion of most processed food costs that U.S. consumers eat is relatively small, resulting in minimal long-term pressure on food prices. Average commodity prices in the 2006 to 2010 period under MDIS would not have increased as much as they did under existing policies, reducing upward pressure on food prices.

MDIS Benefits the Impoverished

In developing nations, a small increase in commodity prices can mean the difference between putting food on the table and going hungry. MDIS reduces the price swings that cause many people who are directly reliant upon staple crops like corn to go hungry when they can no longer afford food. Importers of U.S. corn, wheat and soybeans would have been assured of a stable supply of storable commodities, reducing the need for countries to protect local supplies of grains.

With farmers constituting as much as 60 to 70 percent of the poor

in developing countries, higher prices in the 1998 to 2005 period under MDIS would not adversely affect these farmers because of the large amount of food that they produce for self consumption. In addition, they would receive a more stable income for the product they do sell into the market. In times of high prices, many subsistence farmers and urban poor are often priced out of the market, increasing the number of chronically hungry persons in the world. As a result of the price spike in 2007 and 2008, more than 200 million people fell into the chronically hungry category. By moderating the price spikes, MDIS reduces the price pressure on the poor in developing countries. In addition, MDIS assures participants in the marketplace of an adequate supply of grain, reducing the hoarding tendency, which often results in localized price spikes.

Conclusion

Many challenges lie ahead in the writing of the next farm bill. Funding will be tight and it will be critical to come together in a bipartisan manner to outline the top priorities for the omnibus agricultural legislation.

The average American pays less than ten percent of his or her disposable income on food, which is the lowest rate of any industrialized nation in the world. It is a fantastic bargain. This deal is the result of our national investments in agriculture through farm policy, which have ensured that America's farmers and ranchers can continue to provide the safest and most abundant food supply in the world. The primary purpose of the next farm bill ought to be as a strong safety net that protects farmers and ranchers during tough times for the health of our nation and our rural economies. A forward-thinking and well-designed safety net will be much more cost-effective than reactionary legislation that is put forward in times of emergencies.

When writing the next farm bill, lawmakers must be penny-wise, but not pound-foolish. The MDIS program will have a cost, but as the study by the University of Tennessee demonstrates, it will save money in the long term. Permanent disaster programs, too, save money. For example, the U.S. spent \$30 billion between 1996 and 2002 in emergency and ad hoc disaster programs to help farmers and ranchers when prices collapsed and the farm bill had no safety net for them.⁹ Keeping that in mind, the cost to extend SURE and similar disaster assistance programs for 5 years, which could have replaced those ad hoc disaster programs, is \$8.9 billion.

⁹ USDA Economic Research Service, retrieved from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/FarmIncome/FinfidmuXls.htm>.

We must also complete the next farm bill this year to protect against even further cuts to agriculture. USDA cut \$4 billion from agriculture programs by renegotiating the Standard Reinsurance Agreement in 2011. Congress approved a budget reduction to agriculture programs of more than 15 percent for Fiscal Year 2012, a cut that was two to three times deeper than the average across-the-board reduction in discretionary spending. By waiting until 2013 or later to complete the next farm bill, there may be even less funding available, making it nearly impossible to pass a farm bill that will protect America's family farmers and ranchers in tough times.

By coming together in a strong, bipartisan fashion, it is possible to craft a fiscally responsible 2012 Farm Bill with an adequate safety net to protect America's family farmers and ranchers and to help make rural communities vibrant. On behalf of the members of National Farmers Union, thank you for the opportunity to outline our priorities and I look forward to working with you to enact this critical legislation.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Anderson, you may begin when you're ready.

STATEMENT OF WOODY ANDERSON, COTTON AND WHEAT PRODUCER, COLORADO CITY, TX

Mr. Anderson. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm Woody Anderson, predominantly a dryland cotton farmer in West Texas, Colorado City, Texas. Actually, the locals call it "Colo-ray-do" City. It's located in the rolling plains, right in the middle of Midland and Abilene and Lubbock and San Angelo. I want to thank you and the rest of the Committee for the opportunity to share my views on the next farm legislation this morning. I'd also like to thank, a special thanks to my Congressman, Congressman Mike Conaway, for his work on this Committee and for his work as Chairman of the Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management, and for the great job he does for the 11th District of Texas.

Agriculture is one of the most important industries in

Texas and in the United States. As a result, an effective farm bill that supports production agriculture is also an effective jobs bill for the general economy. Overall, U.S. farmers have been benefitting from relatively high commodity prices, when compared to historical averages. However, it is important to remember that the cost of essential inputs, such as seed, fuel and fertilizer, are also at historically high levels. As a result, profit margins for many remain thin. Higher prices have also brought increased market volatility. When coupled with increasingly unpredictable weather, the risk of producing a crop has never been greater.

As a dryland producer in Texas, I have firsthand experience of the risk that farmers face. In 2011, Texas suffered the most devastating drought since records have been kept. On my farming operation, I was unable to harvest even an acre of cotton that I had planted last year. Without the safety net provided by crop insurance and other programs, all authorized by farm legislation, it would have been virtually impossible to survive that devastating loss.

As this Committee works to reauthorize farm legislation, I appreciate the challenges that are posed--that have been posed by difficult budget times in Congress and by those in Congress that continually question the need for farm programs. While agriculture is willing to make a proportionate contribution to deficit reduction, it's vitally important that budget constraints and farm program critics not be allowed to undermine the effectiveness of our farm safety net.

With respect to production agriculture, I strongly encourage this Committee to take into consideration the diversity of production prices, cost structures, and risk profiles. What works for my operation isn't going to be the same as for farmers in California, North Dakota, Iowa, or even here in Kansas. A one-size-fits-all program cannot address this diversity, and I hope that the eventual farm bill will offer a range of programs structured to address the needs of different commodities and production regions.

I also urge the Committee to complete the farm bill this year. We need some certainty regarding farm programs as we look to investments necessary to keep our farming operations economically viable and to assure our bankers that there is going to be an adequate safety net.

While I occasionally grow other crops, I consider cotton to be my primary crop. The 2008 Farm Bill served cotton farmers extraordinarily well and, in recent years, has required minimal Federal outlays. However, deficit reduction efforts are placing unprecedented pressure on the existing structure of farm programs. The cotton industry also faces the unique challenge of resolving the long-standing WTO Brazil case.

In order to respond to the challenges of designing the most effective safety net with reduced funding and to make modifications that will lead to a resolution of the WTO case, it is very important that the next farm legislation includes the cotton industry's proposal of a new revenue-based crop insurance program which will result in strengthening the grower's ability to manage risk. By complementing existing products, the Stacked Income Protection Program, or STAX for short, will provide a tool for growers to manage that portion of their risk for which affordable products are not available currently. This revenue-based crop insurance safety net would be combined with a modified marketing loan that is adjusted to satisfy the WTO case. Even with those modifications, the marketing loan will remain an important source of cash flow for our producers and our merchants.

Given the diversity of weather and production practices, the menu of insurance choices should be diverse and customizable, allowing for maximum participation and effective coverage. In the 2008 Farm Bill, the introduction of enterprise unit pricing gave producers one more option for insuring against risks that are beyond their control. I strongly support the continuation of that option in the 2012 Farm Bill and would urge consideration of expanding it to allow a producer to apply enterprise unit pricing to the acres that are separated by irrigated and non-irrigated.

As a farmer who understands the vital importance of effective insurance products, I am very concerned about the GAO report that calls for limits on insurance payments. My concern is founded in the fact that crop insurance is a basic safety net that only indemnifies a grower when he incurs a loss. Even then, the grower is not made whole and is only compensated for a portion. For Texas, I can assure this Committee that any

limits on eligibility requirements that deny farmers the opportunity to purchase affordable insurance products will completely undermine the ability to secure production financing.

Farmers understand that agriculture is an extremely risky endeavor, but they also understand that effective risk management is a key to long-term viability. While the goal of farm programs is not to completely remove the risk associated with farming, farm programs should strive to provide opportunities for effective risk management, and for me personally, I think STAX accomplishes that goal.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments and I look forward to any questions at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Anderson follows:]

Prepared Statement of Woody Anderson, Cotton and Wheat Producer,
Colorado City, TX

I am Woody Anderson, a predominantly dryland cotton and grain producer from Colorado City, Texas. Colorado City is located in the Rolling Plains of Texas, right in the middle of Midland, Abilene, San Angelo, and Lubbock. I want to thank Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Peterson for the opportunity to provide my thoughts on the next farm legislation. I would also like to offer a special thanks to my Congressman, Representative Mike Conaway, for his work on this Committee, his chairmanship of the Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management, and for his dedicated representation of 11th District of Texas.

Agriculture is one of the most important industries in Texas and the United States. Numerous businesses, financial institutions and individuals provide supplies, financing and services to the farmers and ranchers that produce our nation's food and fiber. In Texas, it is estimated that farm and farm-related employment accounts for 14% of all jobs. As a result, an effective farm bill that supports production agriculture is also an effective jobs bill for the general economy.

Overall, U.S. farmers are benefitting from relatively high commodity prices when compared to historical averages. However, it is important to remember that costs of essential inputs such as seed, fuel and fertilizer are also at historically high levels. As a result, profit margins remain thin. Higher prices have also brought increased volatility. When coupled with increasingly unpredictable weather, the risk of producing a crop has never been greater.

As a dryland producer in Texas, I have first-hand experience of the risks farmers face. In 2011, Texas suffered the most devastating drought since record-keeping began. Statistics cited in a recent report by the Texas Comptroller indicate that direct and indirect losses from the drought are approaching \$9 billion. On my farming operation, I was unable to harvest even an acre that I had planted to cotton. Without the safety net provided by crop insurance and other programs authorized by the farm legislation, it would be virtually impossible to survive such a devastating loss.

As this Committee works to reauthorize farm legislation, I appreciate the challenges posed by the difficult budget climate in Congress and by those in Congress that continually question the need for farm programs. While agriculture is willing to make a proportionate contribution to deficit reduction, it is vitally important that budget constraints and farm program critics not be allowed to undermine the effectiveness of our farm safety net.

With respect to production agriculture, I strongly encourage this Committee to take into consideration the diversity of production practices, cost structures and risk profiles. What works for my operation isn't going to be the same as farmers in California, North Dakota or Iowa. A one-size-fits-all farm program cannot address this diversity, and I hope that the eventual farm bill will offer a range of programs structured to address the needs of the different commodities and production regions.

I also urge the Committee to complete the farm bill this year--in advance of the expiration of the current legislation. We need some certainty regarding farm programs as we look at the long-term investments necessary to keep our farming operations economically viable; and to assure our bankers that there is an adequate safety net.

While my farming operation occasionally includes grain production, I consider cotton to be my primary crop. The 2008 Farm Bill has served cotton farmers extraordinarily well and, in recent years, has required minimal Federal outlays. However, deficit reduction efforts are placing unprecedented pressure on the existing structure of farm programs. The cotton industry also faces the unique challenge of resolving the longstanding Brazil WTO case.

In order to respond to the challenge of designing the most effective safety net with reduced funding and to make modifications

that will lead to the resolution of the Brazil case, it is very important that the new farm legislation includes the cotton industry's proposal of a new revenue-based crop insurance program which will result in strengthening growers' ability to manage risk. By complementing existing products, the Stacked Income Protection Plan, or STAX for short, will provide a tool for growers to manage that portion of their risks for which affordable options are not currently available. This revenue-based crop insurance safety net would be combined with a modified marketing loan that is adjusted to satisfy the Brazil WTO case. Even with modifications, the marketing loan will remain an important source of cash flow from merchandisers and producers.

Farmers understand that agriculture is an extremely risky endeavor, but they also understand that effective risk management is the key to long-term viability. While the goal of farm programs is not to completely remove the risk associated with farming, farm programs should strive to provide opportunities for effective risk management. STAX accomplishes that goal.

Given the diversity of weather and production practices, the menu of insurance choices should be diverse and customizable, allowing for maximum participation and effective coverage. In the 2008 Farm Bill, the introduction of enterprise unit pricing gave producers one more option for insuring against those risks that are beyond their control. I strongly support the continuation of that option in the 2012 Farm Bill, and would urge consideration for expanding the option to allow a producer to apply enterprise unit pricing to acres that are separated by irrigated and non-irrigated practices.

Regarding crop insurance products, there has been increased scrutiny given to those programs as indemnities for the 2011 crop have increased. However, despite the dramatic increase in indemnities for last year's crop, total indemnities remain below total premiums, and thus, the program is operating at a loss ratio less than 1.0.

As a farmer who understands the vital importance of effective insurance products, I am very concerned about a recent report by the Government Accountability Office that calls for limits on insurance programs. My concern is founded in the fact that crop insurance is a basic safety net than only indemnifies a grower when he incurs a loss. Even then, the grower is not made whole and is only compensated for a portion of his loss. The value of crop insurance coverage is based directly on the expected market value as determined in the futures market. In Texas, essentially all farmers purchase insurance on all of their acres in crop production. For cotton, most acres have coverage between 60 and 70%. If a grower receives an indemnity under that type of policy, that indemnity leaves a 30 to 40% loss that is uncompensated. Now, there are efforts by GAO and some in Congress that attempt to deny that basic coverage to producers by imposing arbitrary limits. I would also oppose any conservation compliance requirements in order to be eligible for Federal crop insurance benefits. For Texas, I can assure this Committee that any limits or eligibility requirements that deny farmers the opportunity to purchase affordable insurance products will completely undermine the ability to secure production financing.

Along those lines, I also encourage this Committee to resist efforts to further tighten existing payment limits and income means tests on other support programs. Artificially limiting benefits is a disincentive to economic efficiency and undermines the ability to compete with heavily subsidized foreign agricultural products. Artificially limited benefits are also incompatible with a market-oriented farm policy.

As a final point, cotton farmers understand that our ability to produce a crop is directly tied to there being a strong and stable demand from the textile manufacturers that produce yarn, fabric and a wide variety of textile and apparel products. We are fortunate to sell our cotton to mills in the United States, as well as several countries in the international market.

For U.S. mills, the 2008 Farm Bill introduced an economic assistance program, and I am pleased to say that the program has been a resounding success. We have seen a revitalization of the U.S. textile manufacturing sector, as evidenced by new investments and additional jobs. I urge this Committee to continue this program in the new farm bill.

To maintain a healthy presence in highly competitive export markets, continuation of adequately funded export promotion programs such as the Market Access Program and Foreign Market Development Program is critical. Individual farmers and exporters do not have the necessary resources to operate effective promotion programs which maintain and expand markets--but the public-private partnerships, using a cost-share approach, have proven highly effective and have the added advantage of being WTO-compliant.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments

and look forward to answering your questions at the appropriate time.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Hunnicutt, you may begin when you're ready.

STATEMENT OF ZACHARY HUNNICUTT, CORN, SOYBEAN, AND POPCORN
PRODUCER, AURORA, NE

Mr. Hunnicutt. Thank you, Chairman Lucas and the rest of the House Agriculture Committee, for the opportunity to discuss the upcoming farm bill and its impact on my operation and the general farm economy.

My name is Zach Hunnicutt and I'm a fifth generation farmer in Hamilton County, Nebraska, raising irrigated corn, soybeans, and popcorn with my father and brother. My wife Ann and I have two kids who will hopefully be the sixth generation on the farm one day. I've been farming full-time for 5 years, and though not representing any particular group today, my wife and I do serve on the Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee for Nebraska Farm Bureau and American Farm Bureau Federation.

While the country's been mired in a protracted recession, constantly looking for evidence of green shoots, the agriculture section of the economy has flourished. Given the recent prosperity and the historic Federal budget deficit, the farm bill will be a target for cuts. I understand that the burden to reduce budgets will be shared across the board. However, I would encourage the Committee to ensure that farmers and ranchers are not penalized for this success by bearing an unequitable share of the cuts and would urge the Committee to provide an environment that allows flexibility for farmers to respond to market signals, to maintain healthy programs that have proven successful, and to take care in crafting a bill to make it as easily explained to the public as it can be.

Federal crop insurance has been a valuable tool for our operation and I would strongly oppose harming this program. The ability to purchase insurance that protects against catastrophic losses provides an effective risk management tool, especially for beginning farmers. When I began farming, the availability of crop insurance was important in securing operating capital, and this is definitely a factor for many others in my situation. It does not and should not guarantee a profit, but establishing a known flow of revenue and mitigating severe risk factors are invaluable for acquiring operating loans.

I would also urge the Committee to maintain the public-private partnership with crop insurance companies, rather than moving the servicing of insurance to the Farm Service Agency. The time and resources required to effectively manage insurance policies would be too great to add on to the responsibilities already taken on by the FSA.

In recent years, we've seen multiple hail events during the growing season, and even with a staff dedicated solely to adjusting and processing claims, it can take several months to sort out all the details. Piling these responsibilities on the FSA office would harm both the insurance program and the management of FSA's current functions. Our insurance agents and adjusters do an outstanding job of managing this complex and time-sensitive process, and it would severely weaken the entire program to take it out of their hands.

Any safety net provisions, conservation programs, insurance programs, or any other agricultural aspects of the farm bill should have the following aims: To allow farmers flexibility to respond to market signals; to be as streamlined as possible; and to be easily explained to the public.

Creating incentives for farmers to make decisions based on government payout rather than what the market is dictating is the last thing any of us want to see, as it will undermine the whole program and distort the market, as well as discourage innovation and production. A safety net should protect from catastrophic loss, but not guarantee profit for participants.

Streamlined programs will reduce the cost to maintain and will provide simple, more easily understood options for producers. This is obviously a challenging goal, with the myriad agricultural products represented in the farm bill, but one that's worth the payoff. It's likely that budget cuts will force this to happen in some manner. My hope is that it will be done in a way to maximize efficiency, rather than just to cut costs.

Finally, it's imperative that this policy be easily explained and defended to the public. Agriculture is on display

and under the microscope like never before and there will be much public scrutiny of any government spending in this arena. We're in a time where the 24 hour news cycle has been shortened to the 140 character cycle. Misinformation and misunderstandings, like we saw with the recent pink slime debacle, can have tremendous impacts in a very short amount of time. It's critical that the aims and motivations of this legislation be presented in a way that makes sense to an ever-more interested public.

This legislation is being crafted at a unique time of record farm prosperity and record deficits, and with critical elections looming. It's my hope that a bill that meets the needs of producers and fits in the current environment of budgetary cutbacks can be passed yet in 2012.

Thank you for your time, the opportunity to provide input, and I will be open to questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hunnicutt follows:]

Prepared Statement of Zachary Hunnicutt, Corn, Soybean, and Popcorn Producer, Aurora, NE

I would like to thank Chairman Lucas and the House Agricultural Committee for the opportunity to discuss the upcoming farm bill and its impact on my operation and the general farm economy.

My name is Zach Hunnicutt, and I am a fifth-generation farmer in Hamilton County Nebraska, raising irrigated corn, soybeans, and popcorn with my father and brother. I have been farming full time for 5 years.

While the country has been mired in a protracted recession, constantly looking for evidence of green shoots, the agriculture sector of the economy has flourished. Given the recent prosperity, and the historic Federal budget deficit, the farm bill will be a target for cuts, and I understand that the burden of reduced budgets will be shared across the board. However, I would encourage the Committee to ensure that farmers and ranchers are not penalized for this success by bearing a greater share of the cuts, to provide an environment that allows flexibility for farmers to respond to market signals, to maintain healthy programs that have proven successful, and to take care in crafting the bill to make it as easily explained to the public as it can be.

Federal Crop Insurance has been a valuable tool for our operation, and I would strongly oppose making any cuts to this program. The ability to purchase insurance that protects against catastrophic losses provides an effective risk management tool, especially for beginning farmers. When I began farming, the availability of crop insurance was important in securing operating capital, and this is definitely a factor for many other beginning farmers. It does not--and should not--guarantee a profit, but establishing a known flow of revenue and mitigating severe risk factors are invaluable for acquiring operating loans.

I would also urge the Committee to maintain the public-private partnership with crop insurance companies, rather than moving the servicing of insurance to the Farm Service Agency. The time and resources required to effectively manage insurance policies would be too great to add on to the responsibilities already taken on by the FSA. In recent years we have seen multiple hail events during the growing season, and even with a staff dedicated solely to adjusting and processing claims it can take several months to sort out all of the details. Piling these responsibilities on the FSA office would harm both the insurance program and the management of FSA's current functions. Our insurance agents and adjustors do an outstanding job of managing this complex and time-sensitive process, and it would severely weaken the entire program to take it out of their hands.

Any safety net provisions, conservation programs, insurance programs, or any other agricultural aspects of the farm bill should have the following aims: to allow farmers flexibility to respond to market signals, to be as streamlined as possible, and to be easily explained to the public.

Creating incentives for farmers to make decisions based on government payout rather than what the market is dictating is the last thing we want to see, as it will undermine the whole program and distort the market. Innovation would be discouraged in this type of setup as well. Safety nets should protect from catastrophic loss, but not guarantee profit for participants.

Streamlining programs will reduce the costs of maintaining them and provide simple, more easily understood options to producers. This is obviously a challenging goal with the myriad agricultural products represented in the farm bill, but one that is worth the payoff. It is likely that budget cuts will force this to happen in some manner, and my hope is that it will be done in a way to maximize efficiency rather than just to cut costs.

And finally, it is imperative that this policy be easily explained

to the public. Agriculture is on display and under the microscope like never before, and there will be much public scrutiny of any government spending in this arena. In a time where the 24 hour news cycle has been shortened even further to the 140 character cycle, misinformation and misunderstandings can have tremendous impacts in a very short amount of time. It is critical that the aims and motivations of this legislation be presented in a way that makes sense to an ever-more interested public.

This legislation is being crafted at a unique time of record farm prosperity and record deficits, with critical elections looming. It is my hope that a bill that meets the needs of producers and fits in the current environment of budgetary cutbacks can be passed yet in 2012. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to provide input in the development of the farm bill.

The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Hunnicutt.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

Mr. Anderson, you mentioned that you grow wheat in addition to cotton, so set your cotton hat to the side for just a moment. What would be the most effective safety net for your wheat crop?

Mr. Anderson. Mr. Chairman, I apologize for that wheat getting in there. I am not a for-profit wheat producer. I grow cotton. I grow----

The Chairman. That's what my wife accuses me of being.

Mr. Anderson. The wheat that I grow is for conservation tillage, for rotation purposes, and I'm going to have to punt on that question on wheat production for profit. I'm primarily a cotton producer. I do grow grain sorghum for a rotation crop.

The Chairman. Fair enough. In our discussions last fall, we looked at requiring RMA to separate irrigated and non-irrigated policies by practice, both on an enterprise unit and a crop-by-crop basis. What would that option--would that option benefit your farm?

Mr. Anderson. It would help me greatly. I have two circles under irrigation and 30 acres of drip, 4,000 acres of dryland, and we used enterprise units on my farm last year. We were so dry at planting time, with the limited water that I had, I never turned my circles on. I certified them all dryland. Had I been forced to--had I gotten the crop up to a good start and been forced to irrigate it, it would have cost my whole farming operation about \$100,000; so if we could separate those from dryland and irrigated by practice, I think it would vastly improve the choice for producers that have both.

The Chairman. One more question. In your written testimony, you talk about the heavily subsidized foreign competition. Can you describe some of your competitors, what they're doing?

Mr. Anderson. The cotton industry, Mr. Chairman, has been concerned for some time about internal policies in China and in India, and I guess a good case in point here of late would be India's prohibition on exporting cotton in from their country; and the subsidies, the per pound subsidies that China's growers have been benefitting from, I think currently, the subsidy to cotton in China is about \$1.23 a pound; so access to their markets and the manipulation in their internal policies that they can regulate stocks, and consequently, stocks around the world, and how they put those stocks back on the market vastly affects what we do.

The Chairman. Do you believe the United States Trade Representative is doing anything to challenge any of these issues; challenge them, so to speak? You can answer that carefully. I understand that.

Mr. Anderson. I know that our Trade Representatives have this information before them, and I'm not sure how obvious the response has been to that information. I do know that they've been made aware by the cotton industry of some of the challenges that we have in getting our products into those markets.

The Chairman. Thank you. Mr. Harper, you mentioned in your testimony, I think your written testimony, H.R. 3798, the Egg Products Inspection Acts Amendments of 2012, which was recently introduced. The legislation, for some of the folks here with us today, would impose specific production standards for egg farmers. It would define physical cage size dimensions, air quality conditions, labeling requirements and other production practices in a Federal law. As a cattle producer, do you believe it's appropriate to impose Federal standards on livestock producers that are the result of a, shall we say in a polite way, a negotiated agreement between a trade group and an animal rights group?

Mr. Harper. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the question. This legislation is truly a concern for me as a livestock producer. I think sometimes we're tempted to go down a path that seems to maybe, at the time, seem like a comfortable solution to a near-term problem. The problem with adopting production practices, I think we as producers out in the country are the best at determining what production practices are best for our livestock and are best for efficiencies and best for producing the most amount of product we can. I think that going into that area of adopting those practices--probably the biggest concern for me is I think it limits innovation in the future.

I think it--you know, we're constantly striving to improve our production practices and that's obviously with--I'll just state, for example, the amount. You know, we have about half as many cows as we did back in the 1950s and 1960s and we're producing as much beef as we were back then, and that's just a great example of the innovation that industries do on their own. I think to get tied into particular production practices is really a concern for livestock producers.

The Chairman. And to steal the question, if you've got a problem, is it fair to share it with all your friends, too, so to speak? Yes, I understand where you're coming from.

Mr. Harper. Yes.

The Chairman. Mr. Hodgson, the Committee will take a serious look at lowering the acreage cap for the Conservation Reserve Program, and also in the process of deciding the purpose of the program in the future. Given the increased demand for grain, because there is a variety of uses we didn't have for it 15 years ago out there, high crop prices, increasing land values, what do you see as the future role of the Conservation Reserve Program, CRP? And along with that, what changes would you like to see, if any, in the CRP program?

Mr. Hodgson. I would not do away with CRP. I'm not advocating that, and really, I say I think some of this could go back into working lands, and I think that's going to happen anyway. As you say, the higher price of land and higher price of grain, I think people are going to make the choice, if the government doesn't raise their rental rates, to say we can make more money producing than preserving, conserving, so you know, the acreage caps, I know they're talking about changing. I don't know if that's a dramatic difference. I think a lot of this, it's going to come down to what will the government do with the rental rates, and if those aren't changed dramatically, I think obviously, a lot of that land's going to come back into production.

The Chairman. A lot of my neighbors in Oklahoma say that if we're going to put 45, 50 percent of the corn crop through the ethanol cookers, depending on what crop yields are and weather conditions are in any given year, that from a livestock perspective, from an animal and food, human food perspective, we have to have more product. There is a driving effort in some areas out there, not in opposition to renewable fuel, not in opposition to ethanol. But, to simply say if the Federal Government is going to mandate 13 billion gallons of ethanol, we've got to have more, because the classic retort to me this last winter was a certain amount of those 20 percent pellets that were being bought by cow/calf operators were basically made out of crud out of the bottom of the bins. We have to have more feed grain, so CRP, in the tough budget circumstances we're in, and the other issues we're dealing with, is just one of those things on the table.

I now turn to the gentleman from Texas for his 5 minutes. Mr. Conaway.

Mr. Conaway. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Woody, I appreciate those kind words. I just wish my mom was in the audience. She'd have been really happy. Thank you very much.

Woody, you briefly mentioned the STAX program and the relatively difficult effort within the cotton group at large to come up with that program. Could you give us some sense, are all producers just ecstatic with this or are they just, are some folks on the other side looking at it and saying, "Gosh, you're trying to cut a fatter hog than everybody else." Can you give us some perspective on how STAX came together?

Mr. Anderson. I don't think any way you look at it, Mr. Conaway, it would be cutting a fat hog. It has been a very difficult process to reach consensus in transforming cotton's policy over the last 12 to 18 months. The STAX product is a result of a hard look at the WTO findings and what might best get cotton off the front page, if you will, and how we deal

with limited resources going into this farm bill under those budget constraints that I know you're well aware of.

We have consensus within the cotton industry. We had--we've held--we've actually, in the process within the council, have a farm policy task force as an area, a council-wide group. We have an American Cotton Producer farm policy task force, and you actually have the Chairman of both of those groups in your district. It's not been an easy process, but we have reached consensus. The growers across the belt are fully behind the STAX proposal.

It doesn't--the diversity we--even within the cotton industry, one size doesn't fit all. That's why it's important that STAX in some areas will allow producers to insure revenue from 70 to 90 percent, where they may not be carrying a 65 or 70 percent underlying buy-up coverage. In our area, obviously, we're going to carry the buy-up coverage and look at the revenue side of it, depending on what the price selection and crop insurance is that year.

Mr. Conaway. In your testimony, you mentioned there was a combination of STAX and modified marketing loan program. Can you talk to us about how the marketing loan program works in your enterprise?

Mr. Anderson. The marketing loan in my enterprise is a little different. I don't market my own cotton. I market it through a co-op pool through the PCCA in Lubbock, but it allows the pool and producers, too, to level out the payments off that crop throughout the marketing year. It allows them to have an orderly marketing of the crop and not just hold it and dump it on the market at one point in time. It also provides the security to the financial institutions and our bankers that allow them to see that there is going to be a bottom price on their loan.

Mr. Conaway. All ten of the witnesses have asked for choices; have asked for options; have asked for not to have a one-size-fits-all program, but we also have immense criticism of the complication of the existing safety net, ACRE, SURE, all those kinds of things. One-size-fits-all has a certain elegant simplicity to it, but nobody wants that.

Anybody on the panel want to speak to us? Do you realistically think that we can craft something that will do all those things where you get all those choices, be explainable to your banker and to the financiers and others, and avoid the criticism of being too complicated for producers to comply with? Any of the panel want to take a shot at that?

Mr. Anderson. Let me take the first shot, Mr. Conaway. At the risk of stepping on some toes, and I certainly don't intend to, not in this room, in 1996, we had a simple farm bill and it was purported to be a simple farm bill, Freedom to Farm, and it was just going to be a straight payment kind of program and it did not fit all of us, and ultimately, we had to go back in 1980 and look at the DCP kind of program, or 1985, the DCP program that we've enjoyed for the last three farm bills.

The STAX part of the proposal is a crop insurance-based program, and it shouldn't be too difficult to explain as we develop it in the buy-up policy and in the gap coverage policy in STAX.

Mr. Conaway. Anyone else want to take a shot at that?

Mr. Hodgson?

Mr. Hodgson. I do think we need flex--options. You know, I heard somebody say we actually get paid for making management decisions, so different programs for different areas of the country. You know, people in the next county farm differently than I do. In the next state or next area, obviously they've got to have some difference in programs.

Mr. Conaway. So your consensus would be, even if it does complicate your business, you would prefer choices and options, rather than one-size-fits-all programs?

Mr. Hodgson. I would, yes.

Mr. Conaway. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired. We turn to our host from the great State of Kansas, Congressman Huelskamp, for 5 minutes.

Mr. Huelskamp. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Same questions, I guess. First, Mr. Harper, you're the cow/calf producer here. The others kind of do a little bit of it, and you made some reference in testimony about the livestock title. I understand that as well. There are other things in the farm bill, I presume, that impact the bottom line for beef producers. We are in cattle country here, and can you tell me what one or two things in the farm bill would create the most difficulty for

the livestock industry and which you would be most concerned about?

Mr. Harper. Thank you for the question, Mr. Huelskamp. I think a couple things. You know, the conservation programs are a very important part to livestock producers as well as crop producers. I think programs like EQIP have been very good for implementing conservation practices in the livestock industry. Things such as pasture improvements by distribution of water, better distribution of water, cross fencing and things like that, EQIP funding has been very important as far as getting certain operations under compliance with the regulatory issues; things along those lines.

You know, one thing that has been a concern, and it's been kind of talked about quite a bit, is a possible proposed ban on packer ownership. I think that's a big concern for livestock producers like myself. In these volatile times, I'm sure there have been volatile times in the past, but in my term since I started farming after college here about 20 years ago, it's certainly the most volatile times that I've seen. The way we manage that volatility is probably as unique as our individual farming operations. When you take an opportunity away from livestock producers to market their livestock by banning the particular ownership or narrowing the time frame that a particular sector can own cattle, I think that's a big concern for us. We'd just like to have the freedom to market livestock the best way we see fit, and we truly feel like the livestock producers are the best to do that.

Mr. Huelskamp. Mr. Hunnicutt, you mentioned you had a couple kids here that you have. I've got my 10 year old here, so I want to ask you about the Department of Labor regulations, whether you've heard about that, dealing with child labor. He's listening closely to your answer. Tell me your thoughts on that.

Mr. Hunnicutt. Well, we're getting into planting season. We've been doing some field work and I've had my 4 year old son out there with me and before he starts playing with my iPad after a couple hours out there, he's asking all kinds of questions and I'm telling him why I'm out there strip tilling, why it's good for the soil, what's going on, and he's up in the big tractor in a closed cab, buckled in. I mean, he's safer there than he is in our car going down the highway, and because I farm in partnership with my dad and brother, I wouldn't be able to do that if these regulations pass.

I mean, just the--I understand some of the ideas behind it, the idea of maybe there's some labor out there that's being treated badly, but this goes so far beyond. I mean, this is a sledgehammer to kill a mosquito kind of idea, just the loss of knowledge that we'd have to pass on to kids just from them working on the farm. You know, I got my--my Social Security savings goes back to when I was 5 years old walking soybean fields, you know. That kind of thing that would be gone. I mean, it would be--that would harm our farm economy more than about anything else that could happen.

Mr. Huelskamp. I have a question on bankers and credit, Mr. Hodgson. Can you describe any changes in the credit markets with some of the regulations out of Washington, or as we do have a credit title in the farm bill, can you discuss any suggestion of what we need to do within that arena?

Mr. Hodgson. I guess I'm not real familiar with what's going on there. I guess I wouldn't--I don't know.

Mr. Huelskamp. Mr. Anderson or Tom, do you have any comments on those?

Mr. Anderson. I would, actually. I serve on the loan committee on a little small bank in my community, and regulations have really tightened up. Like Mr. Chairman, Chairman Lucas said earlier, we have to have in the file the insurance product. We have to have cash flow stated. We have a file for every producer.

The Chairman. Along with a tax return.

Mr. Anderson. Along with a tax return, yes, sir. Regulations have really tightened up, particularly on the small community banks. The larger banks that have the staff to handle it, I think it's probably not been nearly the burden on, but the small community rural banks, it's really been a problem for, and our producers, too.

The Chairman. The gentleman yields back his time. I would note to my colleagues on the Committee, one of the things I learned in my stewardship under then Chairman Roberts at the House Agriculture Committee a few years ago, it's good to be Chairman. Therefore, I'm going to ask one last question in my

role as Chairman.

Mr. Hunnicutt, you said the safety net should protect from catastrophic loss. Can you define what a catastrophic loss would look like in your operation and the best way you think protection against that kind of loss could be addressed?

Mr. Hunnicutt. Well, up to this point in time I've been farming, I fortunately haven't had to deal with that sort of situation.

The Chairman. Lucky man.

Mr. Hunnicutt. I have a lot more years coming, hopefully.

The Chairman. Yes.

Mr. Hunnicutt. You know, we have a lot of storms roll through our part of Nebraska. You know, we--drought isn't such a--that isn't a concern in our area because we're irrigated, so we're pretty well covered with that. I mean, we could be pretty well devastated with a hailstorm. I mean, you can get pictures from storms, luckily not around us last year, but you couldn't tell that there was corn out there. It looked like it was winter, covered with all the hail. You know, when--if we had half of our acres get hit by that and we're not able to insure that properly, we're out that cost of production there. I mean, that would be--that sort of thing would hit us pretty hard. I mean, I'm--when you talk about catastrophic loss, you're looking more at things that are outside of our control, like the weather and that sort of thing, not just economic changes.

The Chairman. One last question. You, of course, say that the safety net should protect against that catastrophic loss and not guarantee profit for participants. Have you had an opportunity to review any of the farm bill proposals that have been offered by a variety of the groups, and if so, do you have any concerns about that any of these would, "try to guarantee a profit?"

Mr. Hunnicutt. I haven't had the opportunity to review any of the proposals yet at this point. We've looked at those in the upcoming months, but I think there might be a tendency by some out there to want to kind of promise the Moon or look to make sure we can take care of things. I would look at it more as, I need to manage my business and if there is a bad loss or a repeated loss over several years, that's the sort of situation where you look at a safety net; not just to cover general losses that would come in the course of production.

The Chairman. Absolutely. Absolutely. I believe all the time has expired for questions. As is the custom when we're in the home district of one of our Agriculture Committee Members, before we adjourn, I would invite Mr. Huelskamp to make any closing comments he might have.

Mr. Huelskamp. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. A fascinating number of witnesses and the testimony thereof, and real interesting, and I might say for the audience, in looking across here, about the diversity. We see folks here with five or six or two or three or four different crops. Other parts of the country, it's not quite that way, but it makes sense and shows how difficult it is to write a farm bill with that many crops in just this area, and we have the rest of the country.

I certainly appreciate the Chairman and my other colleague, Mr. Conaway, for joining us here and I want to thank the Committee staff. It is a long ways from Washington. I actually like it that way, Mr. Chairman, but it is a long ways to get here, and I do appreciate you coming here and listening.

This is the fourth and final field hearing, and I just want to say on the Chairman's behalf, I just wanted to get out, honestly, get out of Washington, D.C., and hear what real producers have to say before we get started on the farm bill. I thank you for accepting the invitation and being here today. I know it was quite a trek for many here, and I thank you.

The Chairman. Absolutely, Tim, and I want to thank you all again for being here today also. I think we've heard a lot of truly valuable input today. I'd especially like to thank our witnesses for their time.

As I said when we started, there are some challenges that vary by region. We need to tailor our farm policy to fit those unique requirements. I think it's true that farmers and ranchers across the country share many of the same experiences. Whether you're raising corn in Kansas, wheat in Oklahoma, cotton in Texas, soybeans in Nebraska, sorghum in Colorado, we face many similar challenges and your input is an important part of the puzzle as we put together this farm bill, a farm bill that will work for all farmers in all regions of the country.

Once again, I would like to remind everyone listening to

our hearing today here in the room also that the House Agriculture Committee has a website where you can learn more about the 2012 Farm Bill. In addition, you may submit comments to be considered a part of the Committee's farm bill hearing record. Your comments must be submitted using the website before May 20, 2010. That website is agriculture.house.gov/farbill.

Your perspective is vital to this process and I thank all of you for participating today. Under the rules of the Committee, the record of today's hearing will remain open for 30 calendar days, to receive additional material and supplemental written responses from the witnesses to any question posed by a Member.

This hearing of the Committee on Agriculture is adjourned. [Whereupon, at 10:51 a.m. (CDT), the Committee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Compilation of Responses to Farm Bill Feedback Questionnaire, 2012

NOVEMBER 2012

House of Representatives,
Committee on Agriculture,
Washington, D.C.

PREFACE

Prior to writing a new farm bill, the House Committee on Agriculture traditionally embarks on a series of field hearings throughout the United States. The purpose of these hearings is to gather comments and information from those whose livelihoods are most affected by the policy that the farm bill creates. For those who did not get a chance to testify at the field hearings, the Agriculture Committee created an online questionnaire through which any interested party could submit constructive suggestions for the upcoming farm bill. The responses are presented here, in alphabetical order, by individual name.

The Committee would like to thank all those who participated in this process. The information presented in this compilation will be helpful in the formulation of the next farm bill.

[GRAPHIC(S) NOT AVAILABLE IN TIFF FORMAT]

Comment of Ms. Maya

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:24 p.m.

City, State: Columbus, NM

Occupation: Retired--Artist--Alternative Living

Comment: Our organization uses EM (effective microorganisms) from Teraganix--a digestive microbe developed in Japan by Dr. Higa. We have one of the best wastewater lagoons in the state of NM. I use EM in compost, on plants. I use no pesticides. I worked with USDA in Las Cruces and was appalled at their support of pesticides and poisons rather than leading edge alternative safe methods. Our current methods are killing the planet, the soil, the air, the water.

Comment of Christina Abate

Date Submitted: Friday, May 11, 2012, 3:35 a.m.

City, State: Chester, NY

Occupation: Engineer

Comment: More localized farming and perennial crops please. Also, please aid in protecting farmers against the biofuel industry and international agribusinesses such as Monsanto or Cargill.

Comment of Debra Abbott

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 6:06 p.m.

City, State: Chico, CA

Occupation: School Garden Educator

Comment:

1. Increase subsidies for those who are growing healthy fruits and vegetables for the citizens of this country. For too long, the corn, soybean and wheat agribusinesses have been the main recipients of subsidies, and as a result, there has been a dramatic increase in obesity, diabetes and heart disease in this country.
2. Nutrition programs that provide food for those who are most at risk of nutritional deficiencies--children, the elderly and the disabled--must be fully funded.
3. Fully fund those programs that support socially disadvantaged farmers and sustainable food production systems.
4. Fund studies that research the effects of agricultural chemicals on the health of the population

Thank you,

Debra Abbott.

Comment of Barbara Abersold

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 12:09 a.m.

City, State: Boise, ID

Occupation: Retired Teacher

Comment: I would like the subsidies to stop for large industrial farms. I want to see support for local organic growers. I am against GMO crops in general and dislike the wide spread use and overuse of pesticides that are poisoning our water supply and us.

Comment of Santos Abeyta

Date Submitted: Monday, April 16, 2012, 9:12 a.m.

City, State: Albuquerque, NM.

Occupation: Catholic Deacon/Spiritual Advisor for St. Vincent de Paul Society

Comment: Just speaking for food needs in the Albuquerque metropolitan area: Holy Family Parish is currently serving an average of 300-350 families each month with a food box.

All of the food distributed comes to us through the Roadrunner Food Bank (RRFB). We have very little food in the form of USDA commodities this past year. We have had to depend on free fruits and vegetables from RRFB to supplement the food boxes.

It is imperative that our U.S. Government increase the USDA commodities, to at least previous years' levels, so that the unemployed, low wage and people on SSI and the elderly on fixed incomes have an adequate level of food supplies.

Thank You for your consideration. There should be no reason why any person living in the USA should go hungry.

Comment of Jon B. Abrahamson

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:26 p.m.

City, State: Waconia, MN.

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Vegetables.

Size: Less than 50 acres.

Comment: I have a right to have pure food and water. Not a bunch of so called food with chemicals, hormones, vaccines, antibiotics, or fetal flavor enhancers in it!

You Are What You Eat!

BTW: I was leading the charge against Monsanto's Ethoxiquin that was killing our pets some 20 years ago! Same science then as today.

Thank you,

Jon B. Abrahamson,
Waconia MN.

Comment of Beth Abrams

Date Submitted: Wednesday, April 18, 2012, 1:03 p.m.

City, State: San Francisco, CA.

Occupation: Nonprofit Director

Comment: Please do not cut or reduce SNAP, which is a critical lifeline to millions of Americans. Half of food stamps recipients are children. I direct a food program in San Francisco that feeds 2,000

people a week and are strained to feed to people that we serve. In fact, we are in danger of closing down due o lack of funds. Cutting food stamps strains all the smaller safety nets to the breaking point. The bottom line is that if you cut food stamps, mass starvation will result, in the richest country in the world. This goes against the ethics of this country, every major religion, and the values that determine a society that claims to uphold human decency and basic human rights. Do not cut SNAP!

Comment of Bonnie Acker

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 16, 2012, 6:02 a.m.

City, State: Burlington, VT

Occupation: Artist and Farm 2 School Volunteer.

Comment: Around Vermont, we have been building an amazing Farm 2 School movement where food-service staff, farmers, students, teachers and others from the community are getting wonderful local foods into our school cafeterias. There is no greater happiness than to see children--from all walks of life--enjoying delicious, nutritious meals and excited about growing food. At the Integrated Arts Academy here in Burlington--where the children speak 23 languages other than English--all 300 students helped plant 300 raspberry seedlings last week. They cheerfully shared shovels, laughed as they discovered worms, and dreamed about the harvests to come. They were so proud of their work.

May all people in this country be granted enough nutritious and delicious food to live healthy and happy lives. I ask all of you to fund food-assistance programs to an even greater extent than ever before. People here in Burlington, Vermont and in so many other communities will be so uplifted. Thank you so very much.

Comment of Sheila J. Acker

Date Submitted: Monday, March 26, 2012, 12:28 p.m.

City, State: Rock Island, IL

Occupation: Farm Owner/Rent Acreage.

Comment: Please ensure our next farm bill encourages organic farming and enables both small and large farms to attain this status without undue costs.

Please also ensure standard farming does not affect organic farming (cross contamination).

Our children deserve the health that comes with non-genetically engineered food. Scientific studies have proven GMO's alter our genes until we can no longer reproduce. Please do not do this to the next generation.

Sincerely and thank you,

Sheila J. Acker.

Comment of Sophie Ackoff

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 11:41 p.m.

City, State: Cold Spring, NY

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Vegetables

Size: 50-150 acres

Comment: Dear Chairman Lucas,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture on the next farm bill. My district representative is being copied on this testimony. I am a young farmer currently farming in the Hudson River Valley. I know that this country desperately needs young farmers and I have been proud of the programs such as the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program that help the next generation of growers gain the essential skills necessary to farm. Glynwood, the farm at which I currently work, is launching a farmer incubator program thanks to BFRDP funding. This program is going to give many young farmers an opportunity for land and resources. These resources are very difficult to obtain on our own! I ask that the Committee endorse all of the provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236), including:

Mandatory funding for Individual Development Accounts at \$5 million per year. This program helps new farmers raise capital to start farm businesses and is tested and proven by organizations like Practical Farmers of Iowa and the California Farmlink.

Mandatory funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program at \$25 million a year. This program funds essential education for new farmers around the country.

Authorize a new microloan program, to enable young and beginning farmers to better access FSA loan programs.

Revise FSA rules to make loan programs more accessible to more young and beginning farmers.

Reaffirm the existing cost share differential for BFRs within EQIP. Also, reaffirm the advance payment option allowing beginning and socially disadvantaged producers to receive an advance payment for the project's costs for purchasing materials or contracting services, but increase the limit on the advance payment from 30 percent to 50 percent of costs.

Amend the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP) to make farm viability part of the purpose of the program and to give discretionary authority to the eligible entities that implement the program to give priority to easements with an option to purchase at the agricultural use value, deals that transfer the land to beginning and farmers and ranchers, applicants with farm succession plans, and other similar mechanisms to maintain the affordability of protected land.

These and other provisions within the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act will help new growers succeed and I urge you to include them in the next farm bill.

Sincerely,

Sophie Ackoff.

Comment of Roberta Actor-Thomas

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 6:22 p.m.

City, State: Lakeport, CA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Poultry/poultry products

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Real reform is needed. The Earl Butz policy of "get big or get out" has devastated American small farms and rural communities. We struggle to create local markets for local products from small farms but face dumping by the big beneficiaries of the farm bill. Last I heard, the local food pantries are getting commodities at 10¢ per pound. How about a subsidy for local growers of healthy meat and poultry, fruits and vegetables instead of dumping diabetes-causing trash food on our rural communities?

Comment of Richard Acuzzo

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:18 a.m.

City, State: Chico, CA

Occupation: Unemployed

Comment: We need healthy food that is raised and grown properly. We need small farmers to be helped with subsidies and subsidies for large farmers to be reduced or eliminated. Raw Milk and Raw Milk products must be legalized.

Comment of Audrey Adams

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:54 p.m.

City, State: Renton, WA

Occupation: Mother

Comment: As a mother I am very concerned about the direction of unhealthful practices of food production and the Big-Ag protectionism bias from Federal government. Small farmers, especially those producing organic foods, need the MOST protections rather than the least, as it now stands. Taxpayers do not want to subsidize the least healthy foods, such as corn and soy! Subsidies should be reserved for small organic farming only.

Specifically, I support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Comment of Brenda Adams

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:48 p.m.

City, State: Minneapolis, MN

Occupation: Mediator, Communication Teacher

Comment: I am writing to request that your consideration of the consequences of this act for the next seven generations.

In doing so, you will see the wisdom of:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

To deviate from the progress we are making with local, sustainable, organic foods will bring further harm to people and the Earth.

Profits do not drive sustainable business. Profits are the outcome of doing work in harmony with human and Mother Nature. Non-sustainable business harms humans and Mother Nature.

I grew up on a farm. That farmland is now a smothered with chemicals. I eat organic food. I will never support agribusiness as it is now. I teach others the hazards of chemicals and the benefits of wholesome organic foods.

Our taxes need to support people's health and well-being.

The green revolution is over. The rest of the world has rejected GMO foods.

We have a responsibility to work with nature. While at times harder, it is also more fulfilling, rewarding and, of course, it is sustainable.

We must work together to ensure farms and farmers produce healthy food that generate sustainable profits over time, rather than `gross' profits from unhealthy `food stuffs' in the short term.

This is the way of all of us, all business, the future to be healthy.

Beginning from the ground up is the way for us to work that works for everyone on the planet together.

Most sincerely,

Brenda Adams.

Comment of Constance Adams

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 2:25 a.m.

City, State: The Villages, FL

Occupation: Retail

Comment: It's very important to me as a consumer to count on products grown in the USA or elsewhere not to be genetically modified or if they are then it should be mandatory to have labels stating that it is put on it. I feel that with what I have read regarding Monsanto that it is a big bully & also money hungry. I for one detest being used as a guinea pig by anyone. Please help our local farmers be able to grow what they want with the seeds they so choose without Monsanto locking them in to having to purchase their seeds every time. Also as a consumer who purchases organic items I don't want Monsanto's seeds cross breeding with that either. Please help our country be the best producer of great produce! Big business is Not always the best & farmers as well as consumers should deserve a fair choice in that to as well as better selections! It might not matter to some but it does matter to me & my family/friends too.

Thank you kindly for your time.

Sincerely,

Constance Adams.

Comment of Glory Adams

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:06 p.m.

City, State: Eau Claire, WI

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Please write a bill that supports small, family farms; not

large corporate farms or confined animal operations. Include support for programs that support the poor to the extent that they now do-- nothing less. Please do not include any support for out-of-country farmers in Brazil or anywhere else. This support is for only American farmers and American citizens. In no way offer any kind of support to corporate conglomerates such as Monsanto, those spewing pesticides/ herbicides, or GM seeds.

Comment of Joyce Adams

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 9:12 a.m.

City, State: Boynton Beach, FL

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: I have allergies to sulfate and sulfites. It is important that I have healthy food. Please do what it takes to keep chemicals off of our food. I would like all children to have access to healthy food. Thank you!

Comment of Judith Adams

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:04 p.m.

City, State: Seattle, WA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Look around you . . . Americans are in a health crisis. We are one of the unhealthiest nations on this planet, with so many resources at our finger tips and yet we continue to poison ourselves and our children. The facts bear this out . . . consumers and scientists are finally in agreement that the way and what we eat determines our health. Young girls today are facing a crisis that no one talks about. They are maturing at an alarmingly young age. Tumors of the reproductive system are on the rise. Girls are losing their ability to reproduce due to these rapidly growing tumors. And where do they come from? Growth hormones in animals that we eat and milk that we drink; chemical toxins in our food that cause synthetic estrogen to grow in our bodies. Stop this madness! Support organic farming and ranching practices! Stop letting the big agricultural machine run the show. Show that you care for the people of America.

Comment of Lisa Adams

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:47 p.m.

City, State: Lake Pleasant, MA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Other

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: We are new farmers. We just bought a farm because we were tired of watching local farm land be sold and because my daughter and I have MANY food sensitivities. I have to be meticulous about reading labels.

I think it's a disgrace that for my tiny farm I have to make my jam in a commercial kitchen so that I can sell it on a small local farm stand, but Monsanto gets a pass on responsibility.

I can't be a responsible parent and can't take proper care of us both if I'm reading a label that is missing information.

Monsanto just keeps taking. Now they need to join the rest of us. Down with Monsanto and the Bullying.

Comment of Marina Adams

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:01 p.m.

City, State: New York, NY

Occupation: Artist

Comment: Organic Farming will help solve many of our crises, including climate change (global warming), health (cancer and many illness), environmental degradation (land and water bodies) Please READ Maria Rodale's, Organic Manifesto. Truth To Power! We are all connected. Monsanto CEO eats Organic while promoting GMO's and chemical farming. Disgraceful. Vote your conscience.

Comment of Martha Adams

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 6:38 a.m.

City, State: Toledo, OH

Occupation: Writer

Comment: I fully support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the

Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

I do not support:

Taking food from the mouths of the hungry to create a \$33 billion new entitlement program that guarantees the income of profitable farm businesses. That's on top of \$90 billion in subsidies for crop and revenue insurance policies.

Cutting \$4 million from organic research funding and cut funding to support Beginning Farmers in half.

The subsidized insurance program Congress proposes which will allow giant commodity farmers and insurance companies to walk away with billions in taxpayer dollars while putting the land, soil and environment at greater risk.

Sincerely,

M.J. Adams,
Toledo, Ohio.

Comment of Nancy Adams

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:21 p.m.

City, State: Le Roy, MN

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Nuts

Size: 50-150 acres

Comment: Please include the following in the new farm bill:

Support for the next generation--beginning farmers and ranchers

Making healthy food widely available to all Americans

Protecting our natural resources and help farmers care for their land

Driving innovation for tomorrow's farmers and food entrepreneurs

Reforming outdated subsidies and restoring fiscal responsibility in farm policy; and

incentives for renewable energy and energy conservation.

Thank you.

Comment of Shirley Adams

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 8:29 p.m.

City, State: Evanston, IL

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Please reduce pesticide use, support land conservation, and encourage more organic farming. Reduce subsidies to large growers and increase subsidies for small farmers. Focus on healthier food for all citizens. Stop the use of GMO foods that carry pesticide protection within them.

Comment of Tiffany Adams

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:41 p.m.

City, State: Langhorne, PA

Occupation: Registered Nurse

Comment: The health of our country strongly depends on the health of our food. We need to move our focus from growing cheap, commodity crops that only serve to feed the obesity epidemic and, in turn, support growing rates of chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease; to growing varied, fresh, local fruits and vegetables in nutrient dense soil, using sustainable farming practices. We need to make these foods inexpensive and available to all Americans. We owe this to our children: to reverse the trend of shorter lifespan and

increasing deaths from preventable illness in our country. This is why I support the full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286.) I also support fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs. I support the implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236), as well as maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative. Thank you for your serious consideration on this important topic.

Comment of Kathryn Adamsky

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 11:21 a.m.

City, State: Union, ME

Occupation: Home Gardener

Comment: I would like the farm bill to represent the interests of the consumer. Healthy, non-GMO, pesticide free food should be available to all people. Small farms are wonderful because these people live their beliefs and improve the community. Our food should not be a strictly profit driven business run by huge corporations that have no interest in the quality of the product except for its ability to fill their wallets. As a tax payer I expect that the government will use my tax money to protect my interests. That is the original purpose of our government--to protect us from abuse and harm by unethical peoples (corporations). Food and shelter are necessary basics and they should not be exploited or the choices limited by those with power (money). I ask that you do not bow to the money and corruption that threatens to take over this essential piece of our lives. Thank you.

Comment of Balthasar Adell

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:47 p.m.

City, State: Los Angeles, CA

Occupation: Educator

Comment: Now that the Internet actually exists, and I have access to information which is far away from me, but directly affects me, I have to ask myself, why does our government subsidize the production of high fructose corn syrup when we know it contributes to heart disease? It's really evil and you should be held accountable.

Comment of Jonah Adels

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 11:21 a.m.

City, State: Putnam Valley, NY

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Specialty Crops

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: As a small farmer in the Hudson Valley, it is vitally important to my livelihood that support for local food systems and care for the environment be supported in the upcoming farm bill. Too long has the farm bill funneled billions of taxpayer dollars into the hands of agribusiness giants at the expense of small farmers. We are the ones producing the food that will feed New York as gas prices increase. We are the ones creating jobs. Don't make our job harder. Just the smallest cuts in subsidies to the largest producers and insurance guarantees to commodity producers would allow massive job creating, small business supporting changes to our local food systems here in NY. We need your support! Please preserve, as a matter of justice, the vital nutritional assistance programs, and cut the programs that are legitimately wasteful, that distort the free market by tipping the scales in the favor of corporate giants, and the big government that supports it. Funnel just a percentage of those cuts into support for small farms, local food systems, and conservation programs, and you will win the votes of the growing percentage of my generation who is scraping a living by producing food for all of our families. Specifically, please support in the next farm bill:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Thank you!

Comment of Carolyn Adessa

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 8:46 a.m.

City, State: Mamaroneck, NY

Occupation: Social Services

Comment: Please vote to Subsidize Small Family Farms and Organic farmers, Provide Food Stamps for the Poor. Stop Subsidizing Huge Agribusinesses. Please, vote with your conscience not with the influence peddlers.

Comment of Adirondack Council

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:57 p.m.

City, State: Elizabethtown, NY

Occupation: Environmental Nonprofit

Comment: Dear U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture,

On behalf of the undersigned, thank you for reviewing our comments regarding the 2012 Farm Bill. We represent a variety of organizations that support farming in Northern New York.

Despite the significant budget issues we all face in 2012, we are continuing to collaborate and work towards addressing the Agriculture and Forestry challenges in the North Country of New York State and beyond.

While a strong local farming movement is emerging, there are still considerable threats and challenges that farmers in the Champlain Valley and St. Lawrence Valley face. The 2012 Farm Bill has had significant improvements but we believe there are several programs that must be supported by legislation and funding. We are especially concerned with the following issues:

Forest Biomass for Energy Program

The undersigned requests that the Committee continue to support research & development of renewable energy. We ask that you authorize appropriations to encourage forest biomass for energy production especially in the Northeast region of the United States.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program Organic Initiative & Conservation Stewardship Program

These valuable programs assist in the growth of organic farming and conservation of ecologically important lands. These programs administered by NRCS help to encourage improvement of conservation efforts of farm & forest. We ask that the committee fully maintain support of these opportunities for the American people.

GE/GMO Drift Contamination Mitigation and Research

We ask the committee to address our concerns over the damaging, rapid proliferation of GE/GMO plantings on our region's scarce and precious healthy soils, including the unregulated contaminating drift of GE/GMO patented pollen, herbicide resistant weeds, and unwanted seeds onto adjacent, unadulterated farmlands, a rapidly increasing threat to the financial viability of the sustainable farming movement and its non-GMO, non-chemical soil conservation practices.

Rural Development

We strongly urge the Committee to continue supporting Rural Development programs. Investing in rural development initiatives helps small farms and communities access support services, such as slaughterhouses and quality health care. Rural America needs help to improve their struggling economies and community health.

The Local Farm, Food & Jobs Act

The farm bill should support family farms, expanding farming opportunities and investing in the local economy. Programs are needed that will help regional agriculture address production, processing and distribution problems while improving consumer access to healthy foods.

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act

We ask that the Committee fund this act as it supports economic opportunities for beginning farmers, ranchers, and military veterans through loans and other development programs. Programs like the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program, 4-H programs and others have provided great assistance and should be continued. Research and educational programs are critical to the health and well-being of Americans in the future.

The Expanding Access to Farmers Markets Act

This amendment of the Food Stamp Act will improve access to healthy foods and increase purchases through the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), WIC (Woman, Infants and Children), School Food Programs, Senior Farmers' Market Program, and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Programs. We the undersigned, believe that continued and enhanced support of these programs are essential to growing agricultural economies and nutrition education.

The 2012 Farm Bill can be an excellent tool, having a positive and uplifting effect on the rural farming economies of Northern New York State. Much like the New England States to our east, we have an emerging local farming economy that can provide food and farm products in a sustainable manner to the residents. The bill also provides secure farm bill funding for critically important programs that support family farms, expand new farming opportunities, create rural jobs, and invest our local food and agriculture economy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brian L. Houseal, Executive Director,
Adirondack Council;

Kate Fish, Executive Director,
Adirondack North Country Association;

John Bingham, member
Ag Natural Resource Advisory Committee, Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Comment of John Adkin

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:26 p.m.

City, State: Punta Gorda, FL

Occupation: Retired

Comment: We desperately need an Organic Foods Bill! We have children and grandchildren who need organic foods to survive. Please don't let the huge agricultural farms kill our family!

Comment of Janet Adkins

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 1:43 p.m.

City, State: Lawrenceville, GA

Occupation: Food Services Employee--Public Schools

Comment: Please make our farm bill with our children's health in mind. We already know well that there are too many chemicals in use and inspection needs to be more thorough to prevent foodborne illnesses. Our children are the future leaders of our once-great nation.

Comment of Stephen Adler

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:15 p.m.

City, State: Luray, VA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Dairy, Livestock, Poultry/poultry products, Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: We are a small local farm. The farm bill needs to work for the small farmer also. Help us help the local population of concerned healthy eaters.

Comment of Louis D. Agnew

Date Submitted: Tuesday, May 15, 2012, 8:19 p.m.

City, State: Milwaukee, WI

Occupation: Chemist

Comment: Dear Honorable Gwen Moore,

With the new Food Farm and Jobs Act, it seems pertinent that we should be taking into consideration that we are in an era of extreme weather events, hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding, drought, heavy snows or rains that cause mudslides and deep soil erosion, and, for whatever reason, it may be short term or it may be here to stay for awhile.

In light of this, it is important that we both look towards mitigating the severity of potential crises for agriculture, focusing heavily on conservation measures wherever possible, as well as taking a serious look as soil conservation and soil nutrient conservation practices.

Second, but in no way less important, is maintaining a nutritious food supply chain, not only measured in calories, but in mineral nutrients, vitamins and flavor, for the most vulnerable people in our society, including school children, families, elderly, minorities and immigrants.

Some of the programs that are important to the solution to these, most recently of great concern issues are:

The Value-Added Producer Grants Program (VAPG) which provides seed money to help farmers innovate in agriculture and create jobs while securing a sustainable path to market-based farm profitability,

The Conservation Stewardship Program needs to be improved by ranking applications exclusively on their conservation benefits. Farmers count on CSP and other conservation programs to conserve soil for future generations, keep water and air clean, and create habitat for wildlife--all while farming profitably.

We need to guarantee \$25 million per year in mandatory funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. We need a national strategy and commitment to support beginning farmer and ranchers entering agriculture. Without new farmers, we are missing out on the new knowledge and innovations that can facilitate the goals of sustainable agriculture.

To protect soil and survive uncertain weather conditions, the best strategy is one with an emphasis on close attention to the situation combined with a willingness to innovate. One of the best programs we can fund is the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative at \$30 million per year as mandatory funding. Investment in agricultural research is vital to continued productivity and innovation in growing and diverse sectors of American agriculture.

Also, we must provide flexibility for states to use existing food procurement programs to purchase fresh, healthy food from local farmers and ranchers, especially for school meal programs so that our nation's children can become healthy and productive members of our society.

Finally, we should scale back the more uncertain factors in agricultural experimentation today, such as diminishing the rate at which trans-genetic crops that depend upon complete vegetative removal or non-crop removal, which otherwise holds soil in place during severe weather events. The money removed from this sort of research should go towards the more organic engineering strategies that use plant and beneficial organism combinations to effect food production systems. Such systems have higher probabilities of remaining productive during severe weather events, as well as being more reflexive and adaptive in the face of such events.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

Louis D. Agnew.

Comment of Ann Aguilar

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 10, 2012, 2:04 p.m.

City, State: Oak Park, IL

Occupation: Disabled Adult

Comment: Dear Members of the House Committee on Agriculture,

As a person who receives SNAP benefits and volunteers for a food pantry I strongly urge you to refrain from eliminating the food stamp program. It is not only vital to me, but to millions of Americans who are disabled, living below the poverty level, etc.

Thank you for your concern.

Comment of Isabel Aguilar

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 2:28 a.m.

City, State: Lakewood, CO

Occupation: Biology Student

Comment: We all Americans deserve to know what we eat, what we feed our children. It is important understand highly toxic food, organ damaging organisms, are in the market today. It needs to be removed completely from the shell urgently. Let's start working together to plant seed of life. Our generation are facing uncertain future; we cannot allow Monsanto continue his experiment with our children. Our children deserve organic food and natural. Let's, plant organic corn, organic soy, organic cotton seed and so on. We cannot destroy our planet also by spraying contaminants products like Round Up which is causing pollution and degrading our home. No, let's take action now! Monsanto must be arrested for crime of the humanity, there are many evidences how detrimental damaging caused Monsanto around world. There are kids with no arms, what would you do if that baby were your? There are many human beings with detrimental deformities, people dying with cancer, we have to raise our voice today! In Argentina for example, there are people suffering and Doctors and authorities are being deaf, blind, and ignoring the sad reality of their own people. We cannot continue with crossed arms without moving our finger.

Comment of Basheerah Ahmad

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 9:53 a.m.

City, State: Atlanta, GA

Occupation: Fitness Expert

Comment: As a health and wellness provider I see firsthand, how detrimental the lack of healthy food choices can be. People are losing their battle on health everyday either due to poverty, ignorance, and often indifference. This situation will only become worse if our government takes away funding from programs that actually are helping.

Comment of Maimoona Ahmed

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:18 p.m.

City, State: Concord, CA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: We need to protect our future, our children and grandchildren. Farmers were once 90% of the U.S. population. They are disappearing at a rapid rate. We depend on family farms to produce natural food without the GMO ingredients which are shown to destroy the health of all of us. Agriculture should not just be a business for profit but a business to maintain and enhance the health of all Americans. Food and water are the basis of life. You can protect us by endorsing all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act, fully funding conservations programs, maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative and implement all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act.

Comment of Tracey Ahring

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 2:19 a.m.

City, State: Dennard, AR

Occupation: Self-employed

Comment: As a lifelong citizen of this country, I am tired of organic and family farms being shoved aside in order to subsidize bloated, unhealthy, and unsustainable agribusiness.

It's easy to forget now, but this country was founded on the backs on small family farms, producing a wide variety of safe, healthy, organic foods.

And it is way past time to honor that heritage.

Agribusiness has done nothing but produce cheap, toxic food that rewards a limited few with profits while eating away at the vast majority of lives and land on which it relies.

And I'm tired of its attempts to put a stranglehold on my freedom to choose what I feed myself and my family.

If this is indeed the United States, then I should be able to choose the very basics of my existence--and that means safe, healthy, organic food, produced by families that truly care about the land and keeping it fertile for decades to come.

Not agribusiness and its Monsantos and Cargills, who wish to control now and forever the very basics of life and drive all alternatives to extinction--un-American activity at its most extreme.

Therefore, I am requesting a farm bill that honors the real farmers of this nation and all its citizens--one that finally stands for the people and against the corporate welfare that's propped up that parasite called agribusiness.

I am also requesting the full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286):

1. Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.
2. The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).
3. Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Thank you.

Comment of Debbra Aiken

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:54 a.m.

City, State: Coppell, TX

Occupation: Home Gardener

Comment: Freedom is what our country was built on. It is and should be my right to feed myself my own food I have grown, without GMO's or at least properly label them. Your children eat this same GMO food. Don't you care what you are doing to them? Or is it only lining your pockets with corporate money you care about? Stop interfering with my rights.

Comment of James Ainslie

Date Submitted: Saturday, March 24, 2012, 12:58 p.m.

City, State: Hoffman, IL

Occupation: Retired Federal Worker, Volunteer at USDA Food Pantry

Comment: Facts:

- (1) Hunger in our country is continuing to increase.
- (2) Food insecurity is a growing issue that is affecting our retired population and the very young.
- (3) The farm bill constitutes less than or equal to 2% of our Federal Budget.

Comments:

While I believe that all programs need to be reduced to enable our country to address the growing deficit, the current parameters of the SNAP program should continue. There has been discussion in the media of changing the program to block grants. This is the wrong direction for a program that is effective and is among the most efficient in the Federal government. Block Grants for food assistance, given to states will ensure that high population areas will be serviced at the expense of low population areas that have the same requirements.

The concept that private donations can fill the void is fallacious reasoning. Currently the private sector is trying to help fulfill the need, but private funding and assistance during troubled financial times is not a certain solution. I am optimistic that the country is started down the road for economic recovery, however, it is far from certain.

This legislation needs to be accomplished this year. Too many stake holders need to know their future. These stake holders include the farmers and the 49 million individuals who are food insecure. The SNAP program and the Food Banks/Pantry system is only providing 51% to 55% of the monthly meal requirements. Significant reductions or major rewrites to the formula for providing benefits would result in serious negative results for the individuals using this service.

I urge the members of congress to be prudent but also compassionate in enacting legislation that affects your constituents that need assistance. Visit food pantries in your district and see first hand the human cost of not supporting this important legislation.

Comment of Rev. David Aja-Sigmon

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:33 p.m.

City, State: Brooklyn, NY

Occupation: Pastor

Comment: House Agriculture Committee, Thank you for considering what is best for our citizens and the farms.

As someone who daily works with the poor but also has an awareness of national issues in farming. I would like the committee to re-focus the farm bill. It seems like we are more interested in investing in powerful agribusiness (subsidies go to them at a rate that far outweighs small independent farmers) losing the governments money. If we were really considering the U.S. government's money we wouldn't give it all in subsidies to huge successful businesses, then expect the poor to foot the bill through cutting food stamps programs in a terrible economy.

Therefore, I would like to endorse the following measures:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Sincerely,

Rev. David Aja-Sigmon.

Comment of Fred Albach

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:58 p.m.

City, State: Burbank, CA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: I support small farmers and I oppose any and all actions taken by government and large agribusiness which hinders the small farmer. Too many regulations make it difficult for the small farmer to survive. Why do I support the small farmer? Because the quality of his good is generally superior to that grown on a large corporate farm.

Comment of Carrie Albarado

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:15 p.m.

City, State: Pflugerville, TX

Occupation: Homemaker

Comment: I have a love/hate relationship with food. Food is a unifying substance that we all need to survive, and with the wrong knowledge and the funding of the wrong programs the country becomes to hate food. With the right programs and the right knowledge, food becomes a positive enlightening aspect that can and should be shared by all. End the profits of large non-sustainable monoculture by ending the subsidies, the funding, and make policies where the true cost of the "bad" production of food is captured. Only then can we begin to grow and learn to love, not hate, our food. I support local, organic, and sustainable agriculture and can only hope that it becomes feasible for everyone to be able to attain such.

Comment of Robert Albee

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:46 p.m.

City, State: Williams, OR

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Fruits

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: I ask that small producers such as myself be considered as you formulate where to allocate farm bill funds. Small, organic producers are committed land stewards that require funding assistance to implement programs and farm improvements that lead to a cleaner watershed. Fair allocation of government funds to those implementing sustainability will encourage even more participation in agro-ecology.

Comment of Jaime Alcoba

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 9:33 a.m.

City, State: Miami, FL

Occupation: Office Support

Comment: This farm bill would be good because it better allows those who want to stay as farmers to do so. We should not take our hard won agricultural lead overseas the way we did other industries.

Comment of Dawn Alexander

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:02 p.m.

City, State: Monroe, WA

Occupation: Sales Representative

Comment: I am a consumer and I am tired of the "frankenfoods" that fill our grocery stores, causing obesity in America. I do not purchase any of this food. I am all for cutting back on large corporate agriculture subsidies. I am against GMO foods and if the food is genetically altered--it needs to state that on the label. I am all for supporting more Organic Farms in this country. We need to stay safe and healthy.

Comment of Elizabeth Alexander

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:28 p.m.

City, State: Cranbury, NJ

Occupation: Clergy

Comment: Please support sustainable organic farming in New Jersey. Also, help prevent GMO farming that interferes with organic farming. My grandfather was a NJ farmer who suffered the consequences of using unsafe pesticides in the early 1900s. Today our communities want nutritious and safe fresh local foods to eat.

Comment of Simone Alexander

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:38 p.m.

City, State: Chicago, IL

Occupation: Employee at Community Based Organization

Comment: Please ensure that we prioritize the needs of our farming communities before large agribusiness, and that we continue to support

the families across the country who are struggling to put enough food on the table and relying on programs like SNAP to do this. The farm bill has incredible potential to support the livelihood of small farmers and improve our food system, while also maintaining a strong safety net that is so necessary in this economy.

Comment of Peseri Alexandra

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 02, 2012, 10:50 a.m.
City, State: Oyster Bay, NY
Occupation: Student
Comment: Dear Representative,

The following is a list of priorities I feel the farm bill should incorporate:

I would like to see increased assistance for young, beginning farmers, in the form of microloan and agricultural education programs. The farming population is aging, and newer, younger farmers will need to establish themselves. It would benefit our country's agricultural economy and livelihood to help beginning farmers.

Conservation efforts, although funded generously, have begun to degrade due to lack of stringent enforcement. Water quality is a major issue and often occurs due to agricultural runoff. Farmers sometimes feel burdened by government regulation in this area, but still, water quality remains an issue. The Federal government needs to find a medium, whereby rules will be enforced, but also, where farmers are not too strained. Promoting organic agriculture is a feasible and beneficial option that can reduce the degradation of water quality, since it uses less pesticides.

Indeed, funding for organic and integrated farms, both of which use less pesticides and result in much less environmental harm than does conventional agriculture, is essential.

Thank you for your time.

Comment of Suzanne Alford-Hodges

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:29 p.m.
City, State: Russellville, AR
Occupation: Small Business Owner--Retail Picture Framer and Gallery Owner

Comment: Dear Representative Womack, bills that promote health, education about real food and sustainable agriculture while allowing our independent farmers to thrive is critical to turning around our unhealthy population. Lawmakers are subsidizing non food products and the uninformed public is wasting money and destroying their health buying these heavily advertized non-foods. Place high taxes on non-foods, like soft drinks and flavored ``water"! Stop subsidizing chemical creations like high fructose corn syrup and genetically modified foods. I believe that the big agri food business is in the same category as big banks: Making huge profits at the expense of the health of our nation, physically and economically. I'd be interested to know if you are familiar with Michael Pollan's books, in particular, The Omnivore's Dilemma? If not, may I send you a copy?

Suzanne Alford-Hodges

Comment of Michelle Alioto

Date Submitted: Friday, May 11, 2012, 9:58 p.m.
City, State: Oak Park, IL
Occupation: Student, Mother
Comment: I spend many of my community service hours at the local food pantry and see what a difference a little money makes in feeding thousands of families per month. Why cut this Federal budget to feed these poor families? Please put my tax dollars to good use and take care of our struggling neighbors. Thank you for your time.

Comment of Mary Allemier

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 10:23 a.m.
City, State: Hesperus, CO
Producer/Non-producer: Producer
Type: Vegetables
Size: 50-150 acres
Comment: I am a beginning farmer and would like to see more support for the industry. I feed my family and sell a small bit at the local farmers market, but we could do so much more with a little guidance and financial help. Please consider these things in any new farm bills introduced.

Comment of Barbara Allen

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 7:02 p.m.

City, State: Alexandria, VA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: As an active member of the faith community, our congregation supports and collects a variety of canned goods, pasta, jellies, peanut butter and other food supplies. We also collect personal hygiene and baby items each first and third Sunday of each month.

Although as one congregation, we have increased the amount of supplies donated each month, the food pantry often has empty shelves that must be replenished because of the high need of our neighbors.

Too many of our brothers and sisters, and our neighbors are still out of work or are paid a low wage that makes it difficult for them to take care of their families without the benefit of our local food pantries to meet the needs of our neighbors.

We demand that you pass a strong Farm bill that protects programs like SNAP (supplemental nutrition assistance program), TEFAP (the emergency food assistance program), and CSFP (commodity supplemental food assistance program) which help provide food for our local neighbors and millions of America's most vulnerable seniors, children and working poor.

Thank you.

Comment of Christina Allen

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 8:37 a.m.

City, State: Elko, NV

Occupation: Warehouse Associate

Comment: We need good quality produce in the markets and we need to ensure that the seeds we buy will be safe for all farmers including back yard enthusiasts. No GMO seeds! Please help us find a solution that will feed America and keep us safe and free of altered and unhealthy food.

Comment of Diann Allen

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:51 p.m.

City, State: Cupertino, CA

Occupation: Designer, Writer

Comment: It is important that You take feeding the people that you represent in a healthy way. We must reward the best stewards of our main resources--our land, water and air--and stop providing biggest funding for those that deplete Our resources. Feeding our entire population healthy foods, is of utmost importance for a healthy future. We have seen how poor diet has impacted the health of our population and has filled the pockets of industrial giants across the board. Your next steps are being watched and scrutinized. Take positive action to support the people and our land. And don't be confused about the term "people." A picture of a corporation will never be included as part of the true definition of what a person is. Are you a person? Take action to support clean farming.

Comment of Jerrold E. Allen

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 8:14 p.m.

City, State: Falls Church, VA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: I would like to offer my views and expectations on the upcoming farm bill. It is time--in fact long overdue--to pass a farm bill that is truly in the interest of the American people.

The large "agribusiness" companies do not need public support. They have adequate resources for what they are trying to do, which is frequently not in the public interest. The farm bill should foster policies that set a new direction.

1. A new farm bill should support small farmers. It should implement all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3235)
2. A new farm bill should support local agriculture. It should fully endorse all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286)
3. A new farm bill should support the trend toward organic farming. It should maintain the EQIP Organic Initiative.

4. A new farm bill should support agriculture for food, not for fuel. Subsidies for corn ethanol are neither good food policy nor good energy policy.
5. A new farm bill should support a movement away from the toxic chemical monocropping agriculture that has damaged so much soil, weakened nutritional values, and caused illness among consumers, to say nothing of farm workers. It should fully fund conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program.
6. A new farm bill should end subsidies to large agricultural corporations--but the proposed subsidized insurance program is not a satisfactory replacement because of its opportunities for fraud and abuse.

Agriculture is and always will be the foundation of a healthy economy--all must eat. Please offer a farm bill that considers the overall public welfare and not that of agricultural corporations looking for a handout.

Comment of Jonathan Allen

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:59 a.m.

City, State: Brookline, MA

Occupation: Electronics Design Engineer

Comment: My parent's families were all farmers, and so had healthy, unpolluted lifestyles. Without a well balanced farm bill, such living will become totally extinct, and our options as consumers will be eliminated.

Comment of Lynn Allen

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:00 p.m.

City, State: Santa Fe, NM

Comment: Maintaining safe food, Air, Water, and environment is fundamental to life of all species--including us!

Please protect and enhance that safety by cutting the subsidies to large corporate interests, and maintaining support for "real people" who are devastated by the current economy. Corporations Are Not Real People, regardless of their legal status and what politicians may say. Real People need support, not corporations, especially corporations with "Net Profits"!

Your obligation is to the majority of real people, not to corporate interests.

We want to watch you as you serve the real peopled future of this nation and act according to the mission of your governmental department.

Comment of Marie K. Allen

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:01 p.m.

City, State: Waco, TX

Occupation: Landscape Consultant

Comment: We need healthy people to have a healthy nation. Unless we have healthy, sustainably produced food, we cannot become or remain healthy. Small, local farms are in the best position to provide such food.

Comment of Matt Allen

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:11 p.m.

City, State: Raleigh, NC

Occupation: Environmental Geologist

Comment: I would like to see subsidies for big agriculture removed as well as subsidies for corn ethanol. I would like to see more support for small local farmers and incentives for people to get into small farming. The future of our agricultural system is in danger by big agriculture. The food that we currently eat is nutritionally poor and loaded with pesticides and artificial fertilizers. Please open this dialogue and give it some serious thought.

Comment of Mitchell Allen

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:33 p.m.

City, State: Clinton, WA

Occupation: Engineer

Comment: Local economies are in disparate need, and a locally focused, small farmer focused farm bill is one of the best ways to support and stimulate local economies.

Comments of Trisha Allen

Date Submitted: Friday, April 27, 2012, 9:16 a.m.

City, State: Hobe Sound, FL

Occupation: Wine Consultant

Comment: I am for food labeling, in particular the country wide lawsuits involving Monsanto and what percentage of ingredients in our foods that are "UN-naturally" added. I have a friend who has been a beekeeper and am horrified by the over whelming influence this company has had over the quality of our foods. The people are watching how congress and senators vote on this issue very closely. Do the Right Thing, and stop voting with your pocket books and political gain for yourselves!

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 03, 2012 9:15 a.m.

Comment: We need GMO labeling on every product Monsanto touches with their conglomerate over our food sources and what they are doing not just in this country, but around the world. We Need Not Be Afraid of their \$\$\$ available to fight legislation to keep these bill off the Nov ballots around this country. I am contacting all state legislators and friend and family to be aware and make our voices heard on this issue. It is Very important to me and my family's future.

Comment of Whitney Allen

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 03, 2012, 11:50 a.m.

City, State: Forest Park, IL

Occupation: Social Worker

Comment: I am a social worker on the West Side of Chicago and every day I see the impact of hunger in these communities. TEFAP and SNAP are absolutely essential resources for millions of Americans. Please do everything you can to strengthen funding for TEFAP and SNAP and oppose proposals that would change SNAP's structure or reduce funding, restrict eligibility or reduce benefits.

Thank you.

Comment of Dr. John Alloway

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:24 p.m.

City, State: Cabin John, MD

Occupation: Natural Physician

Comment: As a physician and nutritionist, I am appalled at what passes for food in this country. All you need to look at is the health of Americans to see that a much better food situation is super necessary. Pass the organic food bill or you will see much worse health situations in the future.

Comment of Miriam Allred

Date Submitted: Friday, May 11, 2012, 10:06 a.m.

City, State: Salt Lake City, UT

Occupation: Technical Writer

Comment: Programs like SNAP, TEFAP, and CSFP provide vital assistance to many Americans. I want to live in a country where everyone has the food that they need. Please protect these programs.

Comment of Katherine Almeida

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:47 a.m.

City, State: Somerville, MA

Occupation: ESL Teacher

Comment: I would like my food to remain local so I know what is in it and who grows it. I am willing to pay higher prices for it, but above all, I want my food to be food, not a genetic lab experiment.

Comment of Mike Altemose

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 17, 2012, 2:09 p.m.

City, State: Hartford, CT

Comment: Our country (USA) is still in a recovery process from not only what happened on Wall Street, but also from past natural disasters. For proof look at what is happening here in Hartford: shootings and robbery in the streets and at home, people still being laid off from companies in large numbers. Kids being pulled by authorities from their families. Now, to make it worse, Congress is considering cutting the SNAP program that just started and put the burden on D.S.S. and the people they are trying to help. What's up America? This has become the land of the broke and hungry not free and brave.

Comment of Andrew Altman

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:14 p.m.

City, State: Wyncote, PA

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: I will be teaching my students about the new recommendations for healthy eating. Then I will teach my students about how our government supports farmers. Will my students learn that our country supports healthy eating or huge industrial farm businesses? You decide. I urge you to support fruit and vegetable growers as well as small family farmers and others using humane and sustainable farming practices.

Comment of Armand Altman

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 6:13 p.m.

City, State: Hyde Park, VT

Comment: Please support this bill, and hopefully your not influenced by the lobbyists. This bill is not only for the health of your family now, but your grandchildren, and future children.

I hope that your not another politician who compromises his vote and values to support the lobbyists on this bill!

Comment of Billy Altom

Date Submitted: Monday, April 02, 2012, 3:18 p.m.

City, State: North Little Rock, AR

Occupation: Advocate for People/Farmers with Disabilities

Comment: April 2, 2012

Hon. Frank D. Lucas,
Chairman,
House Committee on Agriculture,
Washington, D.C.

Honorable Chairman Lucas, Ranking Member Peterson and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Rural policy is driven in large part by the farm bill. The farm bill, however, covers much more than agriculture. Disability issues have generally had little consideration in the bill, with the exception of some attention to housing and technology (e.g., AgrAbility). It is time to change that, and infuse disability into relevant parts of this important rural legislation. This is why the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) believes that people with disabilities in rural America need to be recognized in the 2012 Farm Bill.

APRIL is a national membership organization dedicated to advancing the rights and responsibilities of people with disabilities in rural America. We provide leadership and resources through a national network of rural centers for independent living, organizations and individuals concerned with the unique aspects of rural independent living. The goal of APRIL is to work with others to find solutions to common problems and to bring rural issues in independent living into focus on the national level.

Farmers and ranchers with disabilities were rightly recognized in 1990 with the creation of the AgrAbility programs. APRIL, and its members, work closely with the state and national program to insure farmers and ranchers with disabilities can remain in their vocation. We seek the same recognition for other rural people with disabilities in this bill.

The health and economic vibrancy of the rural American landscape affects everyone. This includes people with disabilities. Therefore, APRIL urges policy makers to specifically recognize people with disabilities in the reauthorization of the farm bill.

APRIL would urge policy makers to include people with disabilities in all sections of the bill relating to the titles on rural development. For example, in the current bill the section describing "underserved and disadvantaged" populations should specifically include people with disabilities in the list of populations mentioned.

Second, APRIL urges members of Congress to fulfill its promise to rural people with disabilities seeking employment. In 2008 the bill included a new program in Title VI, Subtitle A, Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act, specifically section 6023.

The short title defined the new program:

The Secretary shall make grants to nonprofit organizations, or to a consortium of nonprofit organizations, to expand and enhance employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in rural areas;

And,

Authorization of Appropriations.--There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section \$2,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012."

While section 6023 was authorized in the bill and a recommendation of the proposed level of appropriations was included in the bill, no appropriation was ever made, and rules to establish the program were not promulgated.

This reauthorization creates an opportunity for policy makers to be inclusive of all rural Americans as we strive to strengthen our communities.

Respectfully Submitted,

Billy Altom,
Executive Director,
Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living,
[Redacted].
North Little Rock, AR 72114

Comment of Jose Alvarado

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:04 p.m.

City, State: Colorado Springs, CO

Occupation: Technical

Comment: Large agribusiness does not care about the health effects all the toxins agribusiness uses to produce crops that jeopardize our nation's health thus putting greater strain on our healthcare system and ultimately the general health of our nation. Its All About Profit Only!

Comment of Jose D. Alvarado

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:41 p.m.

City, State: San Pablo, CA

Occupation: Agriculture Engineer

Comment: As consumer, I have the right to know what is the content of my food, as well when I buy clothes, the labels describe me the material of what the clothes are made.

Sincerely,

Jose D. Alvaado,
USDA/APHIS/PPQ Officer.

Comment of Ana Alvarez

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 3:01 a.m.

City, State: Clermont, FL

Occupation: Disabled ex EMT

Comment: Farmers and eaters across the U.S. benefit from a fair and healthy farm bill. We have to stop the subsidies that guarantees more income to the profitable farm businesses, they don't need it. We have to stop the \$4 million cut from organic research funding and the cut in 1/2 to the funds to beginning farmers. We have to stop that new subsidize insurance program that leading sustainable agriculture advocates are calling rife with opportunities for fraud and abuse.

While congress is looking to get rid of direct payments to commodity farmers, the subsidized insurance program it proposes to replace it with will allow giant commodity farmers and insurance companies to walk away with billions in taxpayers dollars while putting the land, soil and environment at greater risk. By failing to place limitations on crop insurance subsidies and to re-attach soil erosion and wetland conservation requirements to crop insurance programs, the Committee has failed to do the full reform that it needed. We can't allow this to happen. We need a real reform and a healthy organic future.

Comment of Margarita Alvarez

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 9:04 p.m.

City, State: Chicago, IL

Occupation: House Wife

Comment: I am currently working on the data collection side of a research project assessing fresh food accessibility in the United States, and is related to child obesity, and I have traveled dozens of communities across the contiguous U.S. and have seen almost no fresh fruit and vegetable availability that is sourced locally. I drive the streets and roads of these, many times rural, communities and find so much agriculture, but none that is destined to be sold locally. More often than not they are commodity crops, or crops to be shipped hundreds or thousands of miles away. I have been in towns that have

plenty of grazing land, and many times land roaming with grass-fed cattle, but just around the corner at the local diner, the meat served didn't come from the town itself, it comes from a large agribusiness type company, thousands of miles away, from where the local chain supermarket purchases its meat. This is extraordinarily inefficient! Please make it so that significantly more food is sourced locally in more places across the country. Make this viable for the farmers and the public. One of the Only places where I have seen a local bounty of fresh fruits and vegetables readily available via produce stands scattered all over the roads is on the way to Madera California, which produces all kinds of fruits, vegetables and nuts. It is embarrassingly ridiculous how poorly we have reversed progress, as compared to our European counterparts, who have been sourcing so much of their foods locally as has been the case for centuries. Why is it so easy to help large scale agriculture, with subsidies but not small scale agriculture? Why is government so stubborn to change this, when they can see that the only ones that benefit are the ruthless, insatiable large agribusiness companies that seem to run it all. Enough of this, it is slowly killing us all. I want to feel proud of the food I eat. I want to be healthy and I want the land to be healthy. Soybean and Corn byproducts should never more be a priority over fruits and vegetables. That kills. Don't you understand, a healthier nation, is better and less of a costly for the nation. We all know somebody affected by obesity or are obese ourselves, so it is obvious obesity is a top killer in America, and you can do something about it, but will you?

Comment of Veronica Alvarez

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 3:36 p.m.

City, State: Honolulu, HI

Occupation: Restaurant Worker

Comment: We need an Organic Farm Bill. As humans, we cannot continue to ignore the fact that unsustainable petroleum based farming methods will leave the vast majority of us unhealthy and hungry in the long run. We need to take care of our 'aina and our ohana. Food stamps are an important part of keeping people with roofs over their heads and getting families food they need during these uncertain economic time. Mahalo for serving the interests of Hawai'i and all the people here.

Comment of Erv Amdahl

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:22 p.m.

City, State: Sierra Vista, AZ

Occupation: Residential Remodeling Design and Sales

Comment: When the original farm bill was enacted many years ago, it was to help the family farm, but somewhere along the way, it lost its intended purpose and the majority of money goes to corporate farms. That needs to end and go back to helping the small farms and organic farms that produce healthier crops and less or not contaminated by chemicals or genetically modified genes that who knows what the dire consequences could be many years down the road. We already know of many harmful things happening because of genetically modified crops and my guess is, that it's only the beginning of all the problems we'll find out in the future, many of which that are already known but hidden by the likes of Monsanto for their own greed.

Comment of Sharilyn Ame

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 11:56 a.m.

City, State: Corvallis, OR

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Dry Beans & Peas, Field Crops, Poultry/poultry products

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: It is time to support small farms, organic farms, and local production for local markets. Food security of regional crops for regional markets needs to become a priority as we enter into an era of increasing fuel insecurity, global climate change, and the corresponding imminent need to wean ourselves off of egregious waste of fossil fuels in food production and distribution.

We must also encourage the transfer of farmland from the aging, soon-to-retire-farmers into the hands of younger, emerging farmers, thus protecting farmland from development and resource extraction. If we are to maintain our freedom and autonomy as nation, proactive recruitment of the next generation of farmers on their own terms is crucial.

More money needs to be set aside for expansion of organic production. Subsidies to big corn and soybean producers must be curtailed, for the health and future of American children is suffering (this is the first generation in recorded history slated to have a lower life expectancy than their parents!), as is the health and future

of our soil, our water, and our democracy.

Submitted Letter by American Jewish World Service; Bread for the World; CARE; Church World Service; Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy; Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns; Mercy Corps; Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network; Oxfam America; Partners In Health; Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty in Africa; United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries; United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society

May 2, 2012

Hon. Frank D. Lucas, Chairman,
House Committee on Agriculture,
Washington, D.C.;

Hon. Collin C. Peterson,
Ranking Minority Member,
House Committee on Agriculture,
Washington, D.C.;

Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen,
Chairwoman,
House Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Washington, D.C.;

Hon. Howard Berman,
Ranking Minority Member,
House Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Chairman Lucas, Chairwoman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Members Peterson and Ranking Member Berman,

We the undersigned organizations write to voice our strong support for U.S. international food aid programs, and request that these critical, life-saving programs be strengthened through reforms to improve effectiveness and efficiency. Through programs authorized under the farm bill, U.S. food aid is estimated to have reached more than 65 million people in fiscal year 2010. Emergency relief and development programs supported through food aid can make a difference in the lives of people in need. Benefits include preventing or reversing malnutrition in young children, meeting the food needs of victims of man-made or natural disasters and improving food security for chronically poor households.

This year's reauthorization of the farm bill presents an opportunity to evaluate current program authorities to determine whether they continue to best meet both emergency and development needs. We hope you will take this opportunity to increase the flexibility of the current food aid program structure while maintaining U.S. leadership on global hunger and food security. By building on program improvements introduced in the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, U.S. food aid can reach millions of additional people while maintaining current spending levels.

As you contemplate further updates to the food aid program, we would urge your attention to two specific issues:

The expanded use of local and regional procurement as an additional tool for delivering food assistance;

The increased provision of non-food resources to cover program expenses coupled with heightened efficiency targets for monetization activities.

Local and regional procurement:

Since 2008, the United States has increased support for local and regional procurement of food aid (LRP), including through Section 3206 of the 2008 Farm Bill which authorized a \$60 million pilot program to implement and study LRP activities in both emergency and non-emergency settings. The LRP pilot has been shown to save money and time, adding an important and versatile tool which can be used to reach people in need. We urge the Agriculture Committee to incorporate greater use of LRP across food aid programs authorized in the farm bill. Toward this objective, we strongly encourage you to maintain and expand authorities currently provided on a pilot basis under Sec. 3206 of the 2008 Farm Bill. Authorized funding should be set at no less than \$100 million annually.

Increased resource flexibility and addressing monetization:

For most food aid programs, limited funding exists to support the implementation of complementary food security activities alongside

direct food distribution. Monetization, the sale of food aid commodities in developing country markets, is commonly used to generate funds needed for these activities. The process of monetization has proven to be an inefficient means of supporting complementary food security activities: according to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), between fiscal year 2008 and 2010, \$219 million in food aid resources was lost as a result of low cost-recovery rates in monetization activities. The same GAO report found that cost recovery for monetization activities averaged 58 percent for USDA administered programs and 76 percent for programs administered by USAID.

In many instances, the use of monetization is not the optimal solution to fund development activities and would not be employed if alternative cash resources were available as part of the food aid programs authorized through the farm bill. In order to address current program limitations, we urge you to incorporate changes that will increase available non-food resources in food aid programs and improve efficiencies in monetization activities. Specifically:

The McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program authorizes the "procurement of agricultural commodities and the provision of financial and technical assistance" to carry out school feeding and maternal and child nutrition programs. This model, in which an implementing partner can request both cash and commodities for program activities, should be replicated in the Title II program.

Additionally, section 202(e) of the Food for Peace Act should be expanded. Currently, this section authorizes up to 13% of the appropriated levels of the Title II budget to be provided for use in the areas of program logistics, management and certain program-related costs. The Agriculture Committee should expand applicable uses of 202(e) resources and lift the existing 13 percent limit to 18 percent.

In conjunction with increased cash resource availability, the use of monetization should be curtailed in instances where substantial cost recovery cannot be obtained. Consistent with previous practice and guidance provided by USAID, the farm bill should direct USAID to utilize monetization in instances where at least 80% cost recovery can be achieved, and to use cash resources to fund complementary program activities in countries that cannot achieve this threshold. Oversight, including through regular, public reporting of monetization cost recovery levels achieved by implementing agencies (USAID and USDA) and post-monetization market impact assessments, should also be supported in legislation.

We appreciate your thoughtful leadership on this issue and look forward to working with you to craft improvements to U.S. food aid programs to ensure that they meet the humanitarian and development needs of the 21st century.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

American Jewish World Service Oxfam America
Bread for the World Partners In Health
CARE Partnership to Cut Hunger and
Church World Service Poverty in Africa
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy United Church of Christ Justice and
Maryknoll Office for Global Witness Ministries
Concerns United Methodist Church, General
Mercy Corps Board of Church and Society
Modernizing Foreign Assistance
Network
CC:

Members of the House Committee on Agriculture;
Members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Comment of Gary Ammirati

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:52 p.m.

City, State: Los Angeles, CA

Occupation: Customer Service

Comment: I have started a small organic edible garden on my land, because it is so hard to trust that food created by others is healthy.

I support the following:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods,
Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

I believe we need to get off our dependency of oil, almost all pesticides and fertilizers are petroleum based and therefore toxic to humans, that is a good place to start, stricter regulations on the chemicals used in farming, but most of all we need to move from our current large farm farming practices to bio-dynamic farming practices.

Comment of James Amory

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:04 p.m.

City, State: LeRysville, PA

Occupation: Cheesemaking Consultant

Comment: Small dairy farms in general have lower costs and higher profit per cow than mega-dairies, yet we are losing the small units. The "Margin Insurance" proposals of NMPF, DFA and others does nothing to address this problem, and introduces insurance companies and more speculation into milk pricing.

Please address the real issues of chaotic and manipulative milk pricing.

Comment of Laurie Amsler

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:59 p.m.

City, State: Albany, NY

Occupation: Furniture Sales

Comment: Instead of money going to big business like Bayer and Monsanto . . . I will no longer buy their products . . . we should be looking into making organic farming better . . . how to work with nature not against her . . . If we don't stop we are going to kill ourselves . . . that's right . . . we are already are . . . please do the right thing and pass this bill.

Comment of September Amyx

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 4:10 a.m.

City, State: Marysville, CA

Occupation: Retired Military/Disabled

Comment: I used to be a Veterinary Technician for the U.S. Air Force, and part of that job was public health, inspecting food. I find the situation concerning GMO foods, food additives, and the rate of illness and obesity in our country more than alarming. Do you actually realize what sort of quandary our country will be in without good, healthful, "as God made it" food? You are already seeing the results of low level long term exposure to pesticides and GMO crops; super bugs, subtle but significant alterations in human development, and strange new diseases. Please, do the USA and all of us, including you, a favor. Stop, Think. Whatever your decision is based on, morals, greed, or corporate coercion, it will affect everyone for a far longer time than anyone thinks or has said to you. You've seen what fracking has done to some water supplies, despite all the assurances that it was totally safe. Don't let our food supply suffer the same fate by human manipulation through genetic tampering or unwise use of chemicals, however 'natural' it may presented. Please, I'm asking YOU to be the moral, ethical, and incorruptible government official who makes the difference.

Comment of Amy Anderson

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:39 p.m.

City, State: Saugerties, NY

Occupation: Disabled

Comment: We MUST move towards organic agriculture in order to survive on planet Earth: global warming has become an obvious reality and organic agriculture sequesters CO2 while non-organic agriculture adds greatly to the CO2 burden. For this reason I support the following:

Full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286);

Fully funding conservation programs such as the Conservation

Stewardship Program and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs;

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236); and

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Thank you for your consideration.

Comment of Caroline Anderson

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 09, 2012, 7:58 p.m.

City, State: Tucson, AZ

Occupation: Diagnostic Medical Sonographer

Comment: These last 4 years have been so incredibly difficult for so many, losing jobs and homes, and now we are left with so many more families of all kinds who are struggling to just survive from day to day. Please, while the rest of the country is getting back on their feet, don't forget those having the hardest time just trying to keep sustenance in their children's mouths until they can find a step up to more self-reliance. By passing the farm bill, we hold a helping hand to give those programs which help struggling families something to hang onto until they can again be productive themselves.

Comment of Carolyn Anderson

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:15 p.m.

City, State: Mt. Pleasant, SC

Occupation: Interior Designer

Comment: I want access to clean, unadulterated, organic food as a means by which to maintain my health and well-being. I also understand that Nature has ways of regaining balance that has been undone by monocultural farming, which tend to be devastating to human and other life. Therefore, I support independent, organic farming in which the care and nurturing of the soil is the best means by which to avoid pests and to grow the most abundant crops.

Comment of Christopher J. Anderson

Date Submitted: Friday, May 11, 2012, 2:19 p.m.

City, State: Madison, WI

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: Dear Farm Bill committee,

I am writing to express my hope that you will improve the farm bill so that it better serves America's health and environmental needs. Programs that support projects to put more healthy foods in the hands of low-income individuals (and really all families) demand support in the midst of an obesity epidemic that is taking a staggering toll on lives and our health care bills. At the same time, I hope you'll also support programs that provide training for current and aspiring farmers so that they can develop farming methods that reduce agriculture's environmental impacts. Without this piece we are taking great risks with our shortsightedness. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Christopher J. Anderson,
High School Biology teacher.

Comment of Dae Anderson

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 10:09 p.m.

City, State: Utica, NY

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Please stop subsidies for Big Ag Commodity crops & offer more support for "Specialty Crops" (i.e., fruits and veggies). Do Not Allow a Cut to SNAP (food stamp) benefits. People are hungry and need more food money as prices are going up all the time. I am disabled and need this assistance. Please help support greater Conservation spending to protect our lands and waters and to heal the damage that has been done by corporate interests.

Thank you Mr. Hannah.

Comment of Elizabeth Anderson

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:12 p.m.

City, State: Brooklyn, NY

Occupation: Graphic Designer

Comment: Living in an urban environment far removed from the production of the food that we eat, it is important to ensure that we have access to the best options for both consumers and producers alike. Reducing the gap from farm to table by supporting local farmers, and keeping that option affordable for all city-dwellers and not just the wealthiest, is essential.

Comment of Eric Anderson

Date Submitted: Friday, March 23, 2012, 5:04 p.m.

City, State: Viola, IL

Occupation: Forestry Consultant

Comment: I realize that shrinking Federal budgets will result in program cuts and reductions. I want to express how useful EQIP has been for so many landowners that just want to do the right thing. Please work to maintain funding for EQIP.

I spoke briefly to Representative Schilling following the House Ag. Committee hearing in Galesburg. I wanted to give further feedback on EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program), a program about which Rep. Schilling inquired. As a forestry consultant I have worked with the EQIP program since about 2007. Each year the program has been tweaked and improved by the NRCS to be evermore relevant to landowner needs. As a consultant I work with an ever growing number of private landowners (currently about 50) mostly in Illinois, but some in Iowa.

In a recent conversation with two long-time timber buyers nearing the end of their careers, the discussion turned to the diminishing quality of hardwood timber in our region. They lamented landowners not planting trees 30 and 40 years ago on harvested timber property. The remaining trees, which were forgotten about and allowed to grow, were low quality or undesirable species (with some exception obviously). This low grade stock makes up much of the mature timber that present day landowners, interested in forest management, must nurse back to health.

EQIP is helping make forestry sustainable in corn and soybean country. It off sets the cost of planning, planting new trees, managing invasive plants, and removing undesirable weed trees, mostly on non-tillable acres. The short term effects of EQIP improve wildlife habitat, aesthetics and work to decrease erosion. Longer term, managed forestry will produce even better wildlife habitat and high quality forestry products.

In the short term EQIP has created interest in managing and making more productive otherwise forgotten farmland and allowed me, as an entrepreneur, to take a passion for conservation that sprouted growing up on the farm in Kansas, matured through my time as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer, and blossomed into a job for myself, two full time employees and a number of seasonal employees, in a few short years.

Comment of Gail Anderson

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:56 p.m.

City, State: Roswell, GA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: It is difficult, at best, to comprehend that I am actually having to write a letter asking my government, the USA, to support the planting and harvesting of non poisonous food. Wouldn't you think this is a no brainer? No one, not even your Grandchildren, wants to eat foods that have been genetically altered and poisoned. How long can you sustain life while breathing, drinking and eating toxins? Please use your common sense and support H.R. 3286 and H.R. 3236, as well as fully funding the Conservation Stewardship Program. Also make sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs. Last but not least, the EQIP Organic Initiative must be maintained. Please don't cut your noses off to spite your faces. Do this for the People!

Comments of Glen Anderson

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:56 p.m.

City, State: Lacey, WA

Occupation: Retired Government Professional

Comment: The farm bill must include:

Help for poor people in the U.S. And Also in other countries to eat healthful, nutritious food.

Protection for consumers Against genetically modified food and Against domination by large agribusiness corporations.

Protections for small family farms and organic farms.

Labeling of foods containing genetically modified ingredients

Labeling of meat and poultry that came from "factory farms"

Vigorous Inspection of poultry by USDA officials, rather than by poultry processing company employees.

Date Submitted: Friday, April 27, 2012 11:06 a.m.

Comment:

- (1) Protect environmental quality from destructive farming practices (e.g., conserve soil, water, etc., limit pesticides).
- (2) Protect Small Family Farms from huge agribusiness.
- (3) Stop Subsidies to huge farming operations and to nasty crops such as tobacco and sugar.
- (4) Protect Farm Workers from exploitation.
- (5) Stop Genetically Modified Crops.
- (6) Make school lunches Healthy And Nutritious without sugar and junk food, but with fresh fruits and vegetables, and with whole grains.

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 09, 2012 5:37 p.m.

Comment: Fully Fund programs to help poor people, children, the elderly, and other vulnerable demographic groups. Fully Fund programs that protect the environment. Fully Fund programs that help Small Farmers and Organic Farmers. Stop Subsidizing Big Agribusiness, Polluters, etc.

Comment of Joy Anderson

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 10:18 p.m.

City, State: Reno, NV

Occupation: Yoga Instructor

Comment: Get your heads out of your wallets and into the health of this and future generations, money means nothing if you do not have your health No more food devoid of nutrients!

Comment of Leonora Anderson

Date Submitted: Friday, May 11, 2012, 7:40 a.m.

City, State: Stockholm, NJ

Occupation: Docent

Comment: I urge you to support the farm bill. Many seniors need our help just to be able to put food on their tables. Our older Americans shouldn't have to choose between food or medication, or food and rent. Let's think of ALL seniors and care for them.

Comment of Marilyn Anderson

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 11:51 a.m.

City, State: Mill Valley, CA

Occupation: Bookkeeper

Comment: We need to stop supporting big AG that uses pesticides and GMOs that are harmful to our health, and change focus to supporting local family farms that provide good healthy food. Subsidies for Big AG have to stop. Let's use that money instead to provide school lunch programs that teach kids healthy eating habits and in the long run cut our health care costs.

Comment of Mark Anderson

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 11:01 a.m.

City, State: Bailey, CO

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Greenhouse/nursery, Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Community and school greenhouses using hydroponic growing systems can be a profitable self sustaining way for communities to learn about the importance of locally grown organic produce. They do not require fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides or any other foreign chemicals an use less than 10% of the water required by traditional farming methods.

For more information on the solution to our agricultural problems

call Mark: [Redacted].

Comment of Nathaniel Anderson

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:13 p.m.

City, State: La Crosse, WI

Comment: Something is killing honey bees, and even as billions are dropping dead across the world, researchers are scrambling to find answers and save one of the most important crop pollinators on Earth.

What is called "colony collapse disorder" hit bee keepers all over the world including 1/2 of the U.S. last spring. Now it has spread to all but a handful of states.

Hives can go from healthy and active to dead and gone.

"In the Australian story, researchers have dissected bees that have died, and they have found that their immune systems have "totally gone to pieces".

As the global collapse of honeybee populations threatens the sustainability of the world food supply, some European organizations are at least trying to do something about it. Today, Britain's largest agriculture co-op announced it would ban eight pesticides thought to be causing colony collapse disorder. (One of them is called imidacloprid.)

In Germany's Baden-Wurttemberg state, 500 million bees died in Spring 2008, due to the insecticidal seed treatment agent clothianidin. Another example is the case of a Swabian beekeeper, who destroyed his whole honey harvest because it contained pollen of the GM corn MON810, after an administrative court declared the honey as 'non marketable'.

So far, there are few answers, but there is a long list of possibilities, which include pesticides and genetically modified crops, also known as GMOs or GMs.

However, I have been learning that not much is known about the accumulating impact of pesticides on insects, animals and even people when you consider, in this modern world how many combinations of pesticides are used. One pesticide by itself might not destroy honey bees, but what happens when farmers spray herbicides, fungicides, insecticides and rodenticides on land that also has genetically modified crops with pesticides built-in?

The United States grows nearly 2/3 of all genetically engineered crops. Last year about 130 million acres were planted with GMs. Much of the soy, corn, cotton and canola have had a gene inserted into their DNA to produce pesticides systemically throughout the plants created and patented by Monsanto. Monsanto also produces genetically modified crops designed not to die when herbicides are sprayed on them. In a perfect biotech world, only the weeds would be killed. But Mother Nature has a way of outwitting human designs. So, now the weeds are becoming resistant to the herbicide sprays and frustrated farmers are putting on more and more poisons.

What this genetically engineered trait does is allow a farmer to spray the herbicide right on the crop, which would have killed the crop, would kill the soybeans, prior to introduction of this gene. The gene comes from a type of bacteria that is found in the soil and it makes the plant immune to the herbicide.

The consequence of this is that glyphosate and Roundup, which is sold by Monsanto--the same company that also sells the seed of the type of soybeans that are immune or resistant to the herbicide--that herbicide has become the most widely used herbicide in the world. The consequence of that is you have one particular herbicide used on a tremendous amount of acreage in the U.S. and elsewhere, especially Argentina and Brazil.

As any biologist would expect, when you have such tremendous pressure on weeds to try to survive this herbicide, some of the weeds that are resistant are selected for and all their competition is killed off. The resistant weeds then proliferate and can no longer be controlled by glyphosate. Then you have a situation where the use of this herbicide has gone up, and on probably millions of acres, other herbicides are having to be used as well as glyphosate in order to control the resistant weeds.

So, what we've been seeing in the past few years is that the overall level of herbicide use is increasing, and it will almost inevitably continue to increase. In this case, it's causing the rise of these resistant weeds and the increased use of herbicides and potentially, may be harming amphibians to boot.

The active ingredient in Round-up is the isopropylamine salt of glyphosate. Glyphosate's mode of action is to inhibit an enzyme involved in the synthesis of the amino acids tyrosine, tryptophan and phenylalanine. It is absorbed through foliage and translocated (moves through plant sap) to growing points. Weeds and grass will generally re-emerge within one to 2 months after usage. Because of this mode of action, it is only effective on actively growing plants. Round-up is not effective as a "pre-emergence herbicide." Monsanto also produces seeds which grow into plants genetically engineered to be tolerant to

glyphosate which are known as Round-up Ready crops. The genes contained in these seeds are patented. Such crops allow farmers to use glyphosate as a post-emergence pesticide against both broadleaf and cereal weeds. Soybeans were the first Round-up Ready crop, which was produced at Monsanto's Agracetus Campus located in Middleton, Wisconsin. Current Round-up Ready crops include corn, sorghum, cotton, soybeans, canola and alfalfa.

So here we have it: GMO's Round-up and other pesticides are killing our Bees, without them the whole world will face starvation!

It is the big pharmaceutical companies that need to be stopped. In the end, they will not only be killing bees, they will be killing us.

It's time we do something!

Kill the poison, save the Bees!

Comment of Raymond Anderson

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 17, 2012, 3:04 p.m.

City, State: Cottage Grove, MN

Occupation: Lifetime Learner

Comment: Eliminate competing objectives:

Cheap food that contributes to poor nutrition that leads to poor health is not cheap.

USDA Organics permits additive (carrageenan) shown to cause inflammation, diabetes, and neoplasia. Dr. Joanne K. Tobacman is convinced beyond doubt that it should be eliminated from food. Industry misrepresents the dangers and cannot be trusted.

Comment of Regina Anderson

Date Submitted: Friday, May 11, 2012, 12:44 p.m.

City, State: Portland, OR

Occupation: Urban Planner/Project Manager

Comment: It is critical that government programs provide a "level playing field" for those engaged in farming, so that small scale and sustainable (non-industrial method) farms can produce and allow farmers to make a good living. The benefits of small scale, sustainable farms to their communities, regional health (by providing very high quality product), and the environment (by providing food products closer to where they are consumed, cutting out "food-miles" travelled) are extremely important impacts that should not be overlooked. Please make sure the Farm Bill 2012 supports small scale, sustainable farming!

Comment of Robert Anderson

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 17, 2012, 6:33 p.m.

City, State: Decorah, IA

Occupation: Biologist

Comment: Please retain or expand conservation programs. With the current high price of corn at this time conservation and protection of soil is taking a back seat. We are losing waterway and buffer strips like mad. Iowa is taking on what could be called scorched Earth with little or no CRP or conservation programs. It is extremely depressing to see all conservation efforts being put under plow all for high fructose corn syrup and ethanol. Please retain conservation programs or better yet expand them. Again, it so very depressing to see all of the conservation efforts being pulled out all in the name of high corn prices. There is little or no CRP left in my area of NE Iowa. I am seeing many conservation efforts like waterways, buffer strips being plowed under for a product that has little to do with food for man.

Comment of Sharon Anderson

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:49 p.m.

City, State: Hammond, OR

Occupation: Senior Citizen with Health/Nutrition Needs

Comment: Please support all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286) and implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

We in Clatsop County, OR have a great interest in developing a sustainable local food economy, with many young people starting up new farms. They face nearly impossible road blocks on a regular basis. Because they are not large enough to qualify as a "small farm" they cannot get reduced interest rates on loans to buy their land, which will cost one young couple an additional \$89,000 in interest over the course of their 30 yr. loan.

These people love farming more than anything else they've ever done in their entire life, they generously donate time and product to local food projects and represent a bright future for our area.

Please help them.

Comment of Shel Anderson

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 7:27 p.m.

City, State: Durham, NC

Occupation: Retired

Comment: I understand the value of corporate agriculture, but I do not want it to be the only option in our country. Having good conservation policy; having opportunity for young farmers to enter the occupation; providing for farmers' markets and grants to small producers to get extra value for their crops; supporting the organic farms; and making sure that all agricultural investments by taxpayers do NOT go to large corporations--these are my concerns.

Comment of Sylvia Anderson

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 3:33 p.m.

City, State: Albuquerque, NM

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Subsidies and supports for Organic growers. No subsidies or support for growers or producers using government land grazing, chemicals, hormones or GMO products.

Comment of Corlissa Andis

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:13 p.m.

City, State: Fremont, CA

Occupation: Hairstylist

Comment: We need balance.

These gigantic ag-farms are a nightmare environmentally. This bill needs to encourage new farming, local farming & organic farming. Do you realize many kids don't know that carrots & potatoes grow in the ground? This is a very noble profession. Community gardens & education are important for our children to experience the importance of farming & feeding the world.

Comment of Darian Andreas

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 10:28 a.m.

City, State: Falls Church, VA

Occupation: Health/Education

Comment: Dear Congressman Moran,

I am very concerned that reforms in Agribusiness may take this country several steps backward. Insurance subsidies should only be provided to those who meet a minimum conservation standard, and we need more, not less, incentive for new small farmers who use sustainable farming methods. I support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Comment of Caroline Andrews

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:14 p.m.

City, State: Fullerton, CA

Occupation: Retired Teacher

Comment: The government subsidies and support for big agriculture have been a big part of the obesity epidemic in this country, with hybridized staples and processed food full of additives like high fructose corn syrup becoming the standard diet of so many Americans. It's times to focus support on organic farmers who grow healthy food so that Americans will have a healthy choice.

Comment of David Andrews

Date Submitted: Tuesday, March 20, 2012, 6:10 p.m.

City, State: Lubbock, TX

Occupation: Disabled

Comment: It is time for the Farmers of America to stand on their own 2 feet just like everyone is expected to do. We are not guaranteed a wage amount, so nor should the farmers that think they have to have brand new tractors and equipment every year or so. I know a lot of farmers as I have grown up around farmers all my life, and they do not need my taxpayer money to make a living. I am sick and tired of supporting millionaires, I also think we need to do away with the CRP Program, which only pays people to own land. I had to buy my land without any assistance, so I expect people that own land to have to pay for it just as I had to.

Comment of Elaine Andrews

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 12:09 a.m.

City, State: Boulder, CO

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Specialty Crops

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: I believe that the future of food security in this country and the ability of global agriculture to feed the world's people rest with local farmers selling directly to their communities and a plethora of small, biodiverse, independent farms engaged in adapting creatively to changing climatic conditions. This is in contrast to the current trend of relying more and more on industrialized agriculture. Vulnerable monocultures, and high-tech chemicals and practices. Please include in future agricultural legislation, clear support for research in organic and low-tech farming practices and the removal of obstacles making it difficult for small farmers to make a go of it.

Comment of Yvonne Andrews

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 6:26 p.m.

City, State: Limington, ME

Occupation: Lic. Vet Tech

Comment: I do not want to eat GMO products, I buy organic seedlings for my garden when I don't start my own seeds, try not to eat too many prepared foods that are not organic and encourage my friends and family to do the same, we need your help!

Thanks.

Comment of Jan Angel

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 10:37 a.m.

City, State: Littleton, CO

Occupation: Educator

Comment: There is a gap growing that can lead to a complete closure of communication between the political representatives and the intelligent constitutes that they represent. Just because large quantities of the educated populace have not chosen to go into politics as a career it does not mean that they are not informed or action oriented. The intelligent and educated factions are indeed aware of the manipulation of our food quality by those who seek to ignorantly make a greedy profit by growing chemically toxic produce. This continued practice will eventually lead to the downfall of these corporate practices. There might be the belief that politicians are the most educated and powerful. Yet the fact remains that if enough educated and concerned citizens want healthy food . . . there is nothing that can stop that from happening here in the U.S. We are at that point. Please step up to this and set up a structure that defends American health and well being and turns away from corporate farming practices that are based upon the least intelligent and obviously lowest self serving motives.

Comment of Donald Angell

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 1:35 a.m.

City, State: Battle Creek, MI

Occupation: Retired

Comment: I urge you to pass a farm bill that strongly supports local, small, family farms. Agribusiness is about profits, not healthy, safe food, humane treatment of animals, and protection of the environment. Do you job to support the thousands of small farmers who you represent, not the handful of agribusinesses that throw money at you. Remember who you work for!

I support:

the full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods,
Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the

Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Comment of Karen Angstadt

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:47 p.m.

City, State: Port St. Lucie, FL

Occupation: Homemaker

Comment: I support the following initiatives for the farm bill:

1. The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).
2. Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.
3. The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).
4. Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

It is essential that agriculture policies adapt to the most urgent needs of the American people--even if they negatively impact large industrial agribusiness. The American people need access to more affordable vegetables and fruits and less over-subsidized and over-processed grains.

I understand that funds are scarce and this is why I ask you to put the needs of the American people ahead of the interest of industrial farming corporations.

In the interest of improving our health and nutrition, the desire to reduce obesity and new cases of type 2 diabetes, and the opportunity to support best practices for growing more nutritious foods, Please overhaul where the money goes. Support the needs of the people who are eating.

Comment of Natalie Angstreich

Date Submitted: Tuesday, May 15, 2012, 12:00 p.m.

City, State: New York, NY

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Field Crops, Forestry, Greenhouse/nursery, Nuts, Specialty Crops, Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: As an urban grower and educator in nutrition and health, it is essential to keep the funding lines for nutrition and nutrition-education programs supported.

Any cuts to SNAP are unacceptable, as they are the only systemic address of gross income inequality as it manifests in food insecurity. Otherwise we are starving the poor, what's that for compassion?

Please support the following:

Community Food Projects Program--\$10 million per year to help communities build food self-reliance.

Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program--\$20 million per year to develop farmers market capacity and create food hubs to connect farmers with schools, hospitals, grocery stores and other markets.

Hunger-Free Community Incentive Grants--An average of \$20 million per year for a new SNAP local fruit and vegetable incentive grant program at farmers markets and other healthy food retailers.

This is the LEAST allocation for healthy food, instead of commodities that are pushed on the American public, fueling heart disease, obesity, and diabetes.

It's time to put our farm subsidies, IF ANY, where they belong: on fresh fruits and vegetables and nuts and seeds: Real Nutrition.

Comment of Jennifer Anson

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 4:55 a.m.
City, State: Gilbert, AZ
Occupation: Registered Nurse
Comment: I support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods,
Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the
Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that
enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to
compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer
and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Please do not cut organic research and support for beginning
farmers. I know how much better I feel when I eat organic and as a
citizen feel this is too important of an area to cut funds from. It is
bad enough GMO's are not labeled but to take funding away from our
healthy options as citizens should not be allowed and I should have a
right to voice supporting funding to the health of myself and family.
Our children are not science experiments and healthy alternatives to
biotech need to be available and supported.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Anson.

Comment of Cheryl Anthony

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 10, 2012, 11:12 a.m.
City, State: Fayetteville, GA
Occupation: Unemployed

Comment: America cannot afford to cut food stamp benefits! So Many
people are still out of work, and barely able to survive. Perhaps the
approval process for receipt of food stamps needs to be re-vamped to
ensure that only those people who are in dire straights receive them,
but cutting food stamps for those who depend in them for their survival
would be devastating for many, many Americans.

Comment of Jamie Antone

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:32 p.m.
City, State: Houston, TX
Occupation: Retail

Comment: I support an Organic Farm Bill to stand up for farmers,
eaters and the environment.

If Congress and the current Administration are serious about the
health of America's citizens, our environment and the economic
viability of independently owned family farms, they will:

Implement a \$25 billion plan to transition to organic food and
farming production, to make sure that 75 percent of U.S. farms are
U.S.D.A. organic certified by 2025.

Feed organic food to all children enrolled in public school lunch
programs by the year 2020.

Pass a Beginning Farmer and Rancher Bill to place a million new
farmers on the land by 2020.

Link conservation compliance with government-subsidized insurance
programs and create a cutoff so each farm receives government funds for
land only up to 1,000 acres.

Comment of Beth Appel

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:53 p.m.
City, State: Chicago, IL
Occupation: Rabbi

Comment: We need a farm bill that supports sustainable agriculture.
We need a farm bill that helps the neediest of this country's citizens
with SNAP benefits. We need a farm bill that prioritizes the production
and distribution of healthy foods.

Comment of Sally Applegate-Rodeman

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 17, 2012, 12:15 p.m.
City, State: Indianapolis, IN
Occupation: Retired Teacher

Comment: Dear Representative Burton,

As your constituent, I favor a farm bill which makes healthy and even organic food widely available to Americans. I would like the bill to support the family farmer and the next generation of farmers. The bill needs to support farming while protecting the American environment. No special subsidies or incentives need be given to large agribusiness concerns such as Monsanto or Bayer. I support the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative and the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. Both are relatively inexpensive to fund, at \$30 million and \$25 million respectively, and would do much to improve America. Thank you.

Comment of Lisa Arbuckle

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:54 p.m.

City, State: Gilbert, AZ

Occupation: Healthcare

Comment: Mr. Flake:

We cannot allow programs for healthy and organic grains, fruits & vegetables to be cut. These are exactly the programs that need to have additional funding. If you want to take money OUT of the budget--take it from big ag corporations like Monsanto that have killed our soil and have stolen the soul from the farming industry.

These big ag companies make billions of dollars a year. WHY are we paying them subsidies? They should be paying all of us in order to subsidize our health care costs for their poisonous products.

Make no mistake, the politicians who are supporting the big ag monster will not keep their jobs in the next election. The veil has been lifted and it's time our politicians are held accountable for their greed and corrupt dealings.

I fully support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Do The Right Thing. Stand up for People and stand up for our future on this planet.

Comment of Lisa Arends

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:38 p.m.

City, State: Brooklyn, CT

Occupation: Manager

Comment: Please:

Protect our food chains, streams and environment.

Protect and encourage locally grown organic farming.

All human beings should have access to natural foods free of pesticides, chemicals and genetic modifications.

All food should be properly labeled to allow consumers to make informed choices to protect themselves from allergic reactions and cancer causing food additives.

Fully fund conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

Fully fund local agriculture initiatives.

Allow local food processing facilities to minimize nationwide Salmonella & other food borne illnesses.

Implement Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunities.

Maintain Organic Initiatives.

Endorse honest labeling for all food.

Mandate farm to school initiatives to get locally produced healthy fruits & vegetables in the hands & mouths of our school children.

Comment of Robert Argue

Date Submitted: Friday, April 27, 2012, 9:16 a.m.

City, State: Bridgman, MI

Occupation: Nonprofit Coordinator

Comment: TEFAP and SNAP are sometimes the only way that children, low-income parents and senior citizens have anything to eat during the day. Do not cut these programs.

Comment of Alto Arie

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 12:37 p.m.

City, State: Cranston, RI

Occupation: Musician

Comment: Yo, I think that the way our food is produced is whack. There are chemicals in everything from garlic to grape fruit! I honestly feel that we should stop all use of pesticides and other crazy stuff I don't even know about. I am a compassionate Vegan and know that the dairy-egg-meat industry is ruining the world as we know it and greatly damaging our health! I think that farmers markets are good because they grow locally and build communities . . . Plus they are good for the economy because people can use food stamps to buy vegetables and fruits . . . This message is meant to support the House Agriculture Committee and hopefully inspire people to partake in wiser and more reasonable practices regarding the cultivation, distribution and promotion of whole organic plant based food sources. If you agree you have my support 110%.

Be Vegan Make Peace,

Mr. Alto Arie.

Comment of Shivani Arjuna

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 11:20 p.m.

City, State: Belgium, WI

Occupation: Wellness Consultant

Comment: We need REAL reform. Please support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

It would be a terrible mistake to cut \$33 billion from the food stamp program while leaving farm subsidies unscathed and/or spending \$33 billion to guarantee the income of profitable farm businesses.

Cutting funding for organic research and Beginning Farmers is another terrible idea.

While getting rid of direct payments to commodity farmers, the subsidized insurance program proposed to replace that would allow giant commodity farmers and insurance companies to walk away with billions in taxpayer dollars while putting the land, soil and environment at greater risk.

We need Real reform!

Comment of Andrew Arlt

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:12 a.m.

City, State: St. Paul, MN

Occupation: Teacher (Science)

Comment: As an environmental and science educator in a low-income, high-needs alternative school, I have seen the effect that limited food resources for things like school lunch and community food access programs can have on children and families.

Nutrition programming for schools and communities must be stepped up if we are going to be able to provide a skills-based change for

hunger. Money for school garden initiatives, community gardening programs, and local or urban farms must be a priority over subsidizing and supported agribusiness.

By returning money from corporate agribusiness and reallocating funds towards smaller scale, family operations, we will be providing jobs, stability, and food security for a new generation of farmers--even for those with no family history of farming.

Please help redistribute and fund the local farm and food system in America!

Sincerely,

Andrew Arlt.

Comment of Casey Arman

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 10:57 a.m.

City, State: Waitsfield, VT

Occupation: Interior Design and Sales

Comment: Please stop supporting and subsidizing big business farms and predatory corporations like Monsanto. I believe your support and funding should instead be directed at supporting smaller, locally and family owned agricultural producers, especially those that operate using environmentally friendly, sustainable farming practices and organic growing methods.

Comment of Ken Armijo

Date Submitted: Thursday, April 12, 2012, 7:07 p.m.

City, State: Bosque, NM

Occupation: Farmer

Comment: I participate in a food drive every month through the Saint Vincent de Paul Society and the New Mexico Roadrunner Food Bank. We donate food for over 100 families living in poverty conditions. The food we donate is mere subsistence that these hard-working folks from Veguita, Las Nutrias and La Joya, New Mexico depend on. Please do not let the TEFAP food fund decrease again. We need this fund.

Comment of Katharine Armstrong

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 7:16 p.m.

City, State: Denver, CO

Occupation: Urban Forager

Comment: Let's support the small sustainable family farms and let the big AgBiz fend for themselves. I do not want my tax dollars to go for the producers of toxic food-like substances. I want to support the healthiest ways of producing foods, including healthy for the environment and the soils.

Comment of Robin Armstrong

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:42 p.m.

City, State: Glastonbury, CT

Occupation: Taxpayer

Comment: It is absolutely Criminal that our government allows big agribusiness to poison our food supply without giving the people so much as a warning. If GMO foods were as good as the real thing, corporations should have no issue with simply labeling them. By the fact that Monsanto threatens to sue the state of Vermont for requiring labeling is a clear indication that GMO's are poison. Organic farming can not be threatened by corporate greed. Wake Up and do what is right for the human race--require GMO farming to be completely isolated so it does not contaminate the Earth, allow organic farmers to sue agribusiness for crop contamination if GMOs are not contained, force agribusiness to pay for the environmental destruction they have caused, just like big oil and tobacco, and most of all require GMO foods to be Labelled so that we can make a democratic Choice!

Comment of Stanley Armstrong

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:28 p.m.

City, State: Martinez, CA

Occupation: Hardware Store Sales

Comment: Please consider our agriculture future as a gold mine. Our agriculture needs to keep us strong and healthy. We need to eliminate toxins from our foods. We need to be responsible with our soil for future generations to survive.

Comment of Susan Armstrong

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 7:57 a.m.

City, State: Hackettstown, NJ

Occupation: Writer

Comment: Organic farming is crucial to the health of our country and planet. It is a crime that the food supply, obviously essential to life, is in the hands of chemical companies like Monsanto, a creator of agent orange and other deadly products. Small sustainable farms, run by farmers who respect and understand the land as a living organism should be supported, not criminalized. Many countries do not even allow GMO's yet in the so called land of the free, we are fighting for the simple right to label these poisons.

``A society that no longer recognizes that Nature and Human Life have a sacred dimension and an intrinsic value beyond a monetary value commits collective suicide." Hedges

Thank you and please allow your humanity to speak instead of your bottom line.

Comment of Vivienne Armstrong

Date Submitted: Wednesday, April 11, 2012, 5:31 p.m.

City, State: Dallas, TX

Occupation: Registered Nurse

Comment: I am a registered nurse at The Visiting Nurse Association of Texas. I see senior citizens struggling to meet their daily nutritional needs. I recall some who have gotten only a sack of potato chips and a can of high sodium soup from a food bank! With traditional food streams declining, the area agencies continue to find it difficult to meet the needs of our community, despite the improvement of the economy. We need a strong farm bill to make sure that we can put food on the table for those that are still struggling. I ask that you pass a farm bill that protects and strengthens programs like TEFAP, SNAP, and CSFP. These programs are a lifeline to people struggling with hunger in your district, and I urge you to make them a priority in the next farm bill.

Comment of Wanda Armstrong

Date Submitted: Tuesday, May 08, 2012, 2:35 p.m.

City, State: Orlando, FL

Occupation: Supportive Housing Specialist

Comment: I help a great deal of homeless in the Orange County area. I would hate to know that food is not available for most of them to eat. Without TEFAP foods I know we could not stay open for them.

Comment of Gail Arnold

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 8:02 p.m.

City, State: Watertown, MA

Occupation: School Teacher

Comment: Dear Representative Markey, I had the pleasure of meeting you at an event with Nancy Pelosi 2 weeks ago.

I won't take much of your time, but I do hope that you support the farm bill, particularly the need to support small farmers and to consider the nutritional needs of children and allow substantial funding for programs that promote healthy food choices for children (and adults).

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Gail Arnold.

Comment of Laura Arnold

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:29 p.m.

City, State: San Diego, CA

Occupation: Business Owner--Recruiting

Comment: Citizens need to have the right to know what they are eating and have a choice to purchase `certified' Organic without exposure to GMO contamination.

Comment of Matt Arns

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:17 p.m.

City, State: Evans, CO

Occupation: Analyst

Comment: The farm bill should be used to help local farmers produce enough food to sport their communities, not to subsidize monopolistic multibillion-dollar agribusiness giants that are more interested in

magnifying the petrochemical market than in actually producing food of the quality and quantity needed to sustain the American people, while also keeping our land fertile and sustainable for future generations.

Comment of Adam Aronson

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:54 p.m.

City, State: New York, NY

Occupation: Education Professional

Comment: It is important to me that the value of organic farming be recognized in the next version of the farm bill. It will not only help promote small farmers for making a sustainable wage, but also ensure healthier options for families.

Comment of Nancy Arpin

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 9:15 a.m.

City, State: Ludlow, MA

Occupation: Information Technology Analyst

Comment: The time has come to truly reform our farming industry in the U.S. it is a sad state when I would feel more comfortable feeding my children food from other countries because I know that they require clear labeling identifying important information about the food, such as containing GMO's.

Our government makes decisions that are in the favor of giant lobbyist agriculture biotech companies when it should be acting on behalf of its citizens. Anyone in their right mind can understand that a chemical company should not be leading our farming industry. It doesn't make sense.

It is also sad to know that in order to feed my family food that will not keep me awake at night means that I have to put myself into the poor house to purchase pricey organic foods. We should be supporting organic farming methods, not methods that are laden with pesticides, herbicides, and all the like, that are putting our health, our children, and our environment at detrimental risk!

Please do the right thing.

Comment of Melissa Arra

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:24 a.m.

City, State: Brooklyn, NY

Occupation: Freelance Artist

Comment: I would like to see greater support for small and mid-sized farms, especially those producing organic foods and practicing sustainable farming methods.

I would like to see fewer subsidies going to large agri and factory farms and more subsidies going to smaller farms--family owned and cooperatives.

I'd also like increased support for our farmers using less pesticides/herbicides and chemicals. I believe these farmers are producing healthier more nutritious foods and ensuring a cleaner planet that will sustain generations to come versus contributing to the overwhelming amount of chemicals that are currently used in many farming practices.

Comment of Alice Artzt

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:49 a.m.

City, State: Princeton, NJ

Occupation: Classical Musician

Comment: Stop letting farmers use pesticides that are killing bees and other pollinators. Stop the use of GMO crops--or at least label them so we can avoid eating toxic stuff. Stop feeding GMO crops to farm animals rendering them unfit to eat also. Stop helping and subsidizing big factory farmers and start helping the little organic family farms.

Comment of LTC Mark Arvidson

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 1:24 a.m.

City, State: Eagle River, AK

Occupation: Retired Army, Building Home/Landscape

Comment: As a former emergency preparedness officer (WMD-CST) for the U.S. Army, and an agricultural advocate, I firmly believe the U.S. should ensure that food security is a priority. This is especially important here in Alaska, where we support local agricultural initiatives such as Alaska Grown, local farmers' markets, urban agriculture and the recent initiatives in Fairbanks such as Resilient Alaska and vertical farming. It is critical to maintain biodiversity and to shorten the distance from farm to table.

Kind Regards,

Mark Arvidson, Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army (Retired).

Comment of Elicia Arwen

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:05 p.m.

City, State: Boulder, CO

Occupation: Psychotherapist

Comment: I believe small organic farms should be encouraged and supported by the United States government. Organic and sustainable farming should be the future of farming in this country. Beginning farmers practicing organic and sustainable farming should also be supported.

Comment of Jasmin Arzate

Date Submitted: Wednesday, April 11, 2012, 4:04 p.m.

City, State: Albuquerque, NM

Occupation: School Counselor

Comment: Our school's population is a very high-needs and poverty is a huge issue; the roadrunner food boxes have been a huge benefit to our students and it would be a tremendous loss to not receive them anymore or even to cut the amount we receive--many students do not have food in the house and rely on the meals at school for nourishment; the food boxes allow them to have something to eat, while their parents (if in the picture) can focus their funds on paying rent or utilities. Please do not consider decreasing the funding to the Roadrunner Food Bank--they serve a huge population that many benefit from!

Comment of John Asadourian

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:00 p.m.

City, State: Prescott, AZ

Occupation: Carpenter

Comment: In order to make no-till agriculture work, you have to get the feedback from those in the industry who are applying the chemicals and know from their own health concerns, there must be other options. By enhancing soil bacteria with fulvic and humic acid, the no-till soil approach can still work but with a sustainable spin. Whomever in the House is looking at these comments, do you feed your family only organic produce and meat products? Thanks for your time.

Comment of Muareen Ash

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:08 p.m.

City, State: River Falls, WI

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Field Crops

Size: 151-300 acres

Comment: I continually hear that organic agriculture is inefficient and cannot feed the world. Conventional agriculture is not doing it, either. Why is it so heavily subsidized through research institutions such as our local college? We organic farmers had to teach each other. That is just one way in which industrial ag gets a break.

Comment of Evelyn Asher

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 8:39 p.m.

City, State: Bloomfield, NY

Occupation: Health Care

Comment: Continuing to force-feed Americans herbicide and pesticide laden produce, devoid of essential nutrients, and meats loaded with antibiotics, hormones and other toxic ingredients, while harassing farmers who produce healthy, clean and nutrition foods is a criminal act beyond imagination. If enemies were sneaking these toxic ingredients into our food supply, it would be considered a terrorist act, so why should our own industrial farmers be allowed to make us all sick? If you don't start protecting Americans from the travesty of industrial farming, Americans will not have much of a future. We Need Sustainable, Chemical-Free Agriculture. Protect Our Small Farms From Monsanto And Other Big-Ag Bullies!

American Consumers Want Clean Nutritious, Organic Food And ``Yes" It Is Possible To Produce This On A Large Scale. The World Health Organization Agrees. Check It Out!

Comment of Margaret Ashley

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:30 p.m.

City, State: Cambridge, MA

Occupation: Nurse

Comment: Please support small family farms and organic farms.

Support programs that teach children and parents about good nutrition and fresh whole foods.

Comment of Gerrard Ashton

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 4:11 p.m.

City, State: Everett, WA

Occupation: Unemployed

Comment: There is absolutely no doubt that America is in the worst health crisis this world has ever seen--with preventable diseases. With highly processed, high calorie, nutritionally bankrupt foods, you will never solve this problem. Also, more drugs, more research and surgeries will never solve the problem. People don't have medication deficiencies, they do have nutritional deficiencies. The only way to ever get ahead of it, is with locally grown, fresh, Affordable unprocessed organic food. Every family I talk to tells me that produce is too expensive, they end up feeding their family 6 days a week at fast food restaurants. Yes, pretty much all of them are overweight and suffering health problems. I ask them if produce and whole food were more affordable if they would change their diet, and every one of them says yes.

We need to get every American off the S.A.D. (standard American diet) diet!

Comment of Janice Ashwood

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:58 p.m.

City, State: Vermont, IL

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Field Crops, Livestock

Size: 1,000+ acres

Comment: I am in total agreement with Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. Agrinews (May 18, 2012) He is talking about the tremendous opportunities agriculture presents ``there's no better calling to be able to improve the environment of this country, to make sure we continue to have the soil that allows us to have this rich diversity of agricultural production, to be able to clean up the waters of our country"

When writing this farm bill consider our environment, our soil and most of all, our most precious commodity, our water.

Comment of Michael Askew

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:49 p.m.

City, State: Dallas, TX

Occupation: Marketing Professional and Organic Consumer

Comment: Please support the crucial area of organic farming and produce. Do not cut research or other funding for this as it is crucial to our generation and the next ones.

Thank you.

Michael Askew.

Submitted Statement by Association of Kansas Food Banks

Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Peterson, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record on behalf of the Kansas Food Bank, Harvesters--The Community Food Network and Second Harvest Community Food Bank, which are the Feeding America food banks serving Kansas.

On behalf of the nearly 200,000 Kansans we serve each year, we urge you to protect and strengthen Federal nutrition programs in the upcoming farm bill

Our three food banks collectively serve every county in the state. We represent the state's network of emergency food providers, which includes nearly 400 emergency food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. We serve nearly 200,000 people in need in Kansas annually and work closely with Kansas' farmers, processors, retailers, schools, churches, community organizations, and the public sector to meet the needs of the hungry in our state.

The demand for food assistance has increased significantly during the recession, and Kansas' network of food banks, church pantries, soup kitchens and other local agencies are stretched thin trying to keep up with requests for assistance. Our three food banks and our local partner agencies have seen a significant increase (approximately 40%) in the number of people turning to our network for assistance since 2008. Many of us are barely able to keep up with current demand, let alone serve even more people seeking food for their families if they lose Federal nutrition assistance.

Federal nutrition programs provide a lifeline for low-income

families struggling to make ends meet. Local charities could not provide current levels of food assistance without support from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). In addition to emergency feeding, many of us also work to connect eligible clients with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) when they are in need of more than the short-term, emergency food assistance we provide. We suggest the following in the 2012 Farm Bill:

Policy Recommendations:

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP): TEFAP is a means-tested Federal program that provides food commodities at no cost to Americans in need of short-term hunger relief through organizations like food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency shelters. Nutritious food commodities provided through TEFAP are an essential resource for Feeding America food banks. As the demand for food remains high at food banks across the country, a continuous stream of TEFAP commodities is necessary for the provision of a steady emergency food supply.

TEFAP commodities account for approximately 25% of the food moving through Feeding America food banks. Food banks combine TEFAP with private donations to maximize TEFAP benefits far beyond the budgeted amount for the program. In this way, food banks exemplify an optimum model of public-private partnership.

TEFAP has a strong impact on the farm economy. According to the USDA's Economic Research Service, producers of commodities provided as bonus TEFAP (those purchased by the USDA to intervene in weak agricultural markets) receive an estimated 85 cents per dollar of Federal expenditure. Producers of other commodities provided through TEFAP receive about 27 cents per dollar. By contrast, only about 16 cents of every retail food dollar goes back to the farmer.

Declines in Section 32 funding and strong agriculture markets resulted in a nearly 30% decline (\$173 million) in TEFAP purchases during FY 2011. This decline is expected to continue in FY 2012 as food banks struggle to meet increased need. The shortfall between supply and demand will only worsen when the SNAP ARRA benefit boost expires, as many participants turn to food banks to make up for the reduction in benefit levels.

TEFAP Administrative funding supports the storage, transportation and distribution of TEFAP commodities, providing food banks and partner agencies with the resources to get emergency food assistance to those in need. Fuel prices increased by 26.4% in 2011, on top of an 18.4% increase in 2010, significantly increasing the costs of transporting and distributing commodities and decreasing the purchasing power of these funds.

As food banks serve a growing number of clients, TEFAP Infrastructure Grants support the infrastructure needed to ensure effective and efficient delivery of TEFAP foods. In FY 2010, USDA had at least four times as many applicants for these grants as they had funding to award, demonstrating the need for infrastructure support.

Farm Bill Priorities for TEFAP:

Increase funding for mandatory TEFAP to better reflect the need for emergency food assistance.

Clarify the Secretary of Agriculture's authority to purchase bonus commodities in times of high need for emergency food relief in addition to times of low commodity prices so the program is responsive both to excess supply and excess demand.

Reauthorize funding for TEFAP Administrative funding at \$100 million per year and rename it TEFAP Storage and Distribution Funds to accurately reflect the funding's purpose.

Reauthorize funding for TEFAP Infrastructure Grants at \$15 million per year.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): SNAP is the cornerstone of the nutrition safety net, providing more than 46 million

low-income participants with monthly benefits via a grocery debit card. Eligibility is based on household income and assets and is subject to work and citizenship requirements. SNAP is one of the most responsive safety net programs, expanding quickly to meet the rising need during the recession. The program is targeted at our most vulnerable; 76% of SNAP households contain a child, senior, or disabled member, and 84% of all benefits go to these households.

As the number of people unemployed grew 94% from 2007 to 2010, SNAP responded with a 70% increase in participation over the same period. As the economy slowly recovers and unemployment begins to fall, SNAP participation and costs, too, can be expected to decline.

The SNAP accuracy rate of 96.19% (FY10) is at an all-time program high. SNAP error rates declined by 61% from FY 1999 to FY 2010, from 9.86% to a record low of 3.81%.

SNAP benefits supplement a household's food budget but are insufficient to last most participants through the month, causing many participants to rely regularly on food banks. Among Feeding America food pantry clients receiving SNAP benefits, over 1/2 (58%) reported having visited a food pantry at least 6 months or more during the prior year.

The average SNAP household has a gross monthly income of \$731 and countable resources of \$333, consists of 2.2 persons, and participates in the program for 9 months. The average household receives a monthly benefit of \$287, or about \$1.49 per person per meal.

Farm Bill Priorities for SNAP:

Protect SNAP by opposing proposals to cap or reduce funding, restrict eligibility, reduce benefits, or otherwise impede access or benefit adequacy. Recent proposals to block grant the program would prevent it from responding effectively to fluctuations in need, and efforts to limit broad-based categorical eligibility would increase administrative costs and access barriers.

Restore the cut to the SNAP ARRA benefit boost used to pay for the 2010 child nutrition bill and phase out the boost in a way that protects families from a cliff in benefit levels.

Encourage better nutrition by maintaining nutrition education, incentivizing the purchase of healthy foods, and ensuring that retailer standards balance adequate access to stores with access to a range of healthy foods and moderate prices.

Build on SNAP's strong record of integrity and payment accuracy by issuing guidance to states on the eligibility of lottery winners and college students and upgrading resources and technology for trafficking prevention.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP): CSFP leverages government buying power to provide nutritious food packages to approximately 599,000 low-income people each month. Nearly 97% of program participants are seniors with incomes of less than 130% of the poverty line (approximately \$14,000 for a senior living alone). Currently, 39 states and the District of Columbia participate in CSFP. Another six states (CT, HI, ID, MD, MA, & RI) have USDA-approved plans, but have not yet received appropriations to begin service.

CSFP is an efficient and effective program. While the cost to the USDA to purchase commodities for this package of food is about \$20 per month, the average retail value of the foods in the package is \$50.

CSFP helps to combat the poor health conditions often found in seniors who are experiencing food insecurity and are at risk of hunger. CSFP food packages, specifically designed to supplement nutrients typically lacking in participants' diets like protein, iron, and zinc, can play an important role in addressing the nutrition needs of low-income seniors.

Many seniors participating in CSFP are able to have their food boxes delivered directly to their homes or to senior centers nearby, an important benefit for those who are

homebound, have limited mobility or do not have convenient access to a grocery store.

Farm Bill Priorities for CSFP:

Transition CSFP to a seniors-only program while grandfathering in current participants to promote greater efficiencies and recognize CSFP's evolution to serving a primarily senior population.

For a growing numbers of Americans, food banks are the only resource standing between them being able to put food on the family dinner table or going to bed with an empty stomach. However, the charitable food assistance network alone cannot meet the needs of these families. It is only through our public-private partnership with the Federal Government through programs like TEFAP and CSFP and sustained support for SNAP and other programs in the nutrition safety net that we can make real strides in the fight against hunger.

As Congress drafts the next farm bill, we ask you to remember the families in Kansas who are facing hunger and the important role that nutrition programs play in their health and well-being, especially for vulnerable children and seniors. We are continuing to explore opportunities to enhance support for Federal nutrition programs through programmatic or policy innovations, and look forward to working with you as you review the title IV nutrition programs and begin the work of crafting the next farm bill. Congress must keep the nutritional safety net strong--the health of our communities depends on it.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brian Walker,
President & CEO,
Kansas Food Bank;

Karen Haren,
President & CEO,
Harvesters--The Community Food Network;

David Davenport,
Executive Director,
Second Harvest Community Food Bank.

Comment of Mark Atherlay

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:44 p.m.

City, State: Los Angeles, CA

Occupation: Voiceover Actor

Comment: PLEASE allow farmers the dignity of doing what they do best, Farming! (Without Agri-Business interfering and squeezing them out of business.) We the People demand it!

Comment of Mary Atkinson

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:16 a.m.

City, State: Richmond, VA

Occupation: Working Artist--Painter

Comment: Enough of Big Ag . . . our food becomes more and more frightening, toxic and lacking in cleanliness. Please support small farms and organic farms,

Mary Atkinson.

Comment of Gurnam Atwal

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:52 p.m.

City, State: Eugene, OR

Occupation: Student

Comment: We all deserve to eat healthy, wholesome, organic food that nourishes our bodies. Would you feed your children this food? It is important to maintain a food system that listens to the natural ecosystem that has been functioning on its own for centuries before we came along. We must work hard to maintain a food system that grows food as close to the natural ecosystems as possible.

Comment of Frances Aubrey

Date Submitted: Friday, May 04, 2012, 9:58 p.m.

City, State: Kensington, CA

Occupation: Artist and Writer

Comment: I eat only local, organic meat and produce. In order to reduce our country's dependence on oil, we must support small farmers,

especially organic farmers. We should not subsidize huge agribusinesses which ruin the soil with chemicals. We must move toward food independence on a local level, and not rely on produce and meat flown in from other countries.

Comment of Marisha Auerbach

Date Submitted: Tuesday, May 15, 2012, 11:04 a.m.

City, State: Portland, OR

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Other

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Diverse farms based on the principles of nature support healthy community ecosystems. Please encourage closed system design where the soil is built onsite using natural processes like composting and strategies for attracting diverse pollinators into the field. The strength and resilience of our national food system comes from tending to our soils for long term stability.

Comment of Darcy Augello

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:11 p.m.

City, State: Doylestown, PA

Occupation: Bookkeeper

Comment: I have been a grower of Organic Vegetables for over 15 years and Organic Free Range Egg. Given the extensive amount of information that is now readily available to the Average American it is imperative that a farm bill is created with conservation and support for organic and sustainable agriculture as it's number one priority. The American People will stand for nothing less.

Comment of Richard Aulicino

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:36 p.m.

City, State: Lake George, NY

Occupation: Holistic Dentist

Comment: Farm policy must favor small farms, organic farms = health of the population. GMO and Monsanto like progress is at the expense of human life which is subservient to profit. The more I find out about health and food the more greed seems to come up versus respect for nature and each other and the animals. We are part of this Earth and it will take care of us as we care for it. Small farms and organic farms are key.

Comment of Rick Auman

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 17, 2012, 4:37 p.m.

City, State: Las Vegas, NV

Occupation: Web Developer

Comment: Small farms help America in so many ways: most use sustainable practices, keeping the soil from being devastated from nutrients and holding pollutants/toxins down.

Comment of Carol Austin

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:32 p.m.

City, State: Bellingham, WA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Livestock

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Do you think you can hold off on helping giant corporations make us sick and kill us with their bad practices, and actually work for the people who elected you? Oh wait, I forget that getting rich helping giant corporations is what most politicians do. Then after you let them make us sick, you can hand us over to the health care and insurance corporations so they can finish milking all our money out of us before we die. Thus insuring that there is nothing left to pass to our children. That's the American way all right--the politicians and corporations get it all while the 99% end up with nothing.

Comment of Lesley Austin

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:08 p.m.

City, State: Burlington, VA

Occupation: Homemaker, Entrepreneur

Comment: It is very simple, please start to care more about the Earth and the farmers and the animals than corporate greed and power. Please acknowledge the connections between the way the Earth is tended and the health of our food, our people, our land. It is so clear to see

that far too many decisions in farm policy are made to placate the huge companies and their desire to hold on to and grow their profits rather than protect and support small farmers, who ought to be the at the heart of our farm policy.

How I wish Thomas Jefferson was here to eloquently remind you of the importance of holding our country's agricultural health higher than the seeking of more monetary wealth for the pockets of a comparative few.

Please do the right thing!

Comment of Richard Austin

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 7:13 p.m.

City, State: Rio Frio, TX

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: I am in support of an Organic Farm Bill that protects and subsidizes small, organic family farms and removes support from large agribusinesses. This change is vital for the health of all Americans.

Comment of Shelly Austin

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:08 p.m.

City, State: Newbury Park, CA

Occupation: Planner

Comment: Please help protect organic farms and the health of the American. We need small, sustainable farms to be given government assistance--not big agricultural companies who are taking the nutrition out of our food and making us fat!

Comment of Annemarie Avanti

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 09, 2012, 6:01 p.m.

City, State: Phoenix, AZ

Occupation: Retired Director of Social Services

Comment: As a former director of programs for Seniors, I've witnessed firsthand retired elders choosing between paying for their medicine, housing and food. I've witnessed some who've chosen to eat canned pet food so they could afford to pay all their bills. At one point in my career, I oversaw a daily evening meals program for the hungry. A majority of those eating dinner, were elderly citizens whose retirement income did not support regular healthy nutrition.

These situations are a travesty in our country. Poor nutrition for seniors only increases our country's Medicare bills. Cutting the (SNAP) food stamp program, (TEFAP)emergency food assistance program, and (CSFP) food boxes for seniors, will leave millions of seniors hungry.

Please protect these programs and fund them to their fullest capacity.

Thank you.

Comment of Roberta Avidor

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:59 a.m.

City, State: Minneapolis, MN

Occupation: Illustrator

Comment: We must support family farms that use environmentally benign methods of cultivation. The health of our soils is of utmost importance not only for the environment, but for human health as well. Big Ag depends far too much on harmful pesticides, herbicides and huge amounts of petroleum for arguably dubious products.

Comment of Frank Ayers

Date Submitted: Friday, May 11, 2012, 9:41 p.m.

City, State: Hollidaysburg, PA

Occupation: Automotive

Comment: I would like to see the shift toward organic farming as much as possible. This is a much safer method of farming in regards to the farmers and farm workers. It also produces a safer product for the end consumer (the public), especially with regards to children.

I believe the Federal government should take an active role in persuading pesticide manufacturers to make the gradual transition to producing primarily organic pesticides. The manufacturers would still maintain their sales and profits, and meanwhile it would make the environment safer as well as creating safer, land sustainable farming. Thanks.

Frank Ayers.

Comment of Harold Ayers

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 03, 2012, 1:37 p.m.

City, State: Gainesville, TX

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Livestock

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: With a all-time low approval rating, you sink to an all new low. Shame on you. This is without a doubt, the most ridiculous bill that I know of to even be up for debate. Why is this even tabled still? This should be a no-brainer. No!

Comment of Carol Ayoob

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 9:05 a.m.

City, State: Presque Isle, ME

Occupation: Community Organizer, Artist, Musician

Comment: Please Do The Right Thing for our health, our children, and the future of this planet! Support local organic farms--by funding best practices--and not funding BiG interests! I am appalled to find such lack of respect for the integrity of farmers who practice Real farming! Index prices not to one standard, but relative to food! This is all too complicated to write here and I resent your lack of long-term planning for a sustainable future.

Comment of Benoit Azagoh-Kouadio

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 11:20 a.m.

City, State: South Dartmouth, MA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Fruits, Livestock, Poultry/poultry products, Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Dear House Committee on Agriculture,

It has reached my attention the presently the farm bill is being redrafted. As a recent member of a small scale agricultural production team, I would like to express some of the reservations that I have about the nature the upcoming bill and what I understand to be a continuation of the entrenched sheltering of industrial agriculture through large scale subsidies and insurance waivers. I believe that there is enough evidence to show that the proliferation of the industrial agriculture model has gone a long way toward negatively impacting farmers and the wealth of actual local farm based economies. Furthermore by flooding the grocery market with a base of cheaply available highly processed monocultural ingredients (soy, corn, beef, etc.) this model of business is contributing to the increasing public health and chronic disease epidemic in this country. As a legislative body is your job to be open to understanding the cause and effect relationship of policymaking and to steer the direction and energy of regulation towards the health of this people. We can no longer ignore the ramifications of continuing this industrial cycle and need to find a way to realize a shift significantly towards productions models that encourage contribution to localized economy and direct support to farmers using permacultural and organic methods. I strongly urge you to do so by fully endorsing such provision as he Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act, the Conservation Stewardship Program, the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act, and the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Thank you.

Comment of Tatiana B.

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 11:50 a.m.

City, State: Los Angeles, CA

Occupation: Physical Therapist

Comment: I believe our strength, independence and health as a nation greatly relies on how we manage our food supply and the quality of food we produce. Please consider supporting small family-run and organic farms instead of subsidizing large industry farms.

As the committee considers the 2012 Food and Farm Bill, I urge you to:

Support our fight against hunger by maintaining and strengthening critical nutrition programs in this time of unprecedented need. We must not solve our budget problems on the backs of those experiencing food insecurity, including our most vulnerable--our children, the elderly, and the disabled;

Provide an even "plowing" field by fully funding programs that support beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, organic farming, regional farm and food economies, and rural development. We need more farmers and ranchers, more

sustainable food production, and more economic opportunity in our food system;

Support family farmers that really need help, not the biggest farms that don't: End subsidies (aka direct payments and countercyclical commodity programs), and replace them with loophole-free agriculture risk coverage. Additionally, implement a cap on crop insurance premium subsidies;

Ensure that limited conservation funding maximizes lasting environmental benefits: Limit funds to Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) for animal waste management infrastructure by eliminating the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Livestock Set-aside and protect the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) from disproportionate cuts, and improve it by ranking applications solely on their conservation benefits.

Comment of Yvonne Babb

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:07 p.m.

City, State: Bend, OR

Occupation: Teacher, Science, Agriculture, Naturalist

Comment: Dear Representative Walden;

Please do your best to balance the long term needs of sustainable agriculture when voting on the attached bills.

Tell Congress that you support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

We must keep the research on organic farming and ranching practices, which are essential to solving the problems which are caused by large scale practices which do not mimic nature. The problems with bees, pesticides and antibiotics in meat are not remedied by old thinking. We need the environmentalists and farmers/ranchers to work together to solve problems with the best interest of the human in mind.

Thank you,

Yvonne Babb.

Comment of Michelle Babin

Date Submitted: Sunday, March 25, 2012, 7:06 p.m.

City, State: Sutton, MA

Occupation: Dietetic Intern/Student

Comment: March 25, 2012

To whom it may concern,

As a concerned citizen who takes pride in our country's land, commodities and overall health of our nation, I would like to voice my gratitude and encouragement for the 2012 Farm Bill. As a future registered dietitian, I have had the rewarding opportunity to witness first-hand how the farm bill has truly made a difference in people's lives as well as my own personal life. I was fortunate enough to work at a local WIC office in rural North Carolina for a few weeks. To be honest, I was never a strong proponent of food stamps and many other government-funded programs, but my opinion has definitely been altered. I was not very familiar with WIC and what the program actually entailed. As I learned the ins and outs, I realized that this program was properly developed to truly meet the needs of lower income families who honestly need the help. The fact that this program requires quarterly health checks for not only the infants and children but also the mothers, gives this program a lot of credibility. Not everyone is able to qualify for this program. It is a give and take process, in which the client needs to put in some effort and if they follow through, they will be rewarded.

I met a few families who outwardly seemed to be making ends meet,

but in reality were facing some very difficult times. Some families who had it all only a few months ago, were now scrounging for a way to provide for their children. Many of these people were hard working, honest people who were hit hard by the depressed economy. Seeing their faces light up when we explained that they were qualified and what that truly meant was gratifying. This program does not have the funding to provide a lot for these families, thusly why it is called a supplemental program. Its purpose is to help lighten the burden significantly, provide the necessities. After this experience, I am a true proponent for this nutrition program and pray that it may continue into the future.

On a lighter note, growing up I was fortunate enough to live in a small New England town. I cannot see into my neighbor's house or can a throw a baseball and hit it. We have land; beautiful lush land. My father has kept a large garden in our backyard since I was a child, something I have truly missed now that I am on my own. I have been very blessed to grow up in an amazing part of the country. Much of the industry in our town is agriculture based; therefore, I know just how important it is for our farmers to have proper representation within our government.

One of the major local agricultural spots is a dairy farm. I personally know the family and have witnessed firsthand what a depressed economy can do to their business. Not only is their family affected, but also the whole community hurts with them. It is so crucial that our farmers and agricultural workers have proper support so that even in hard times, they will have someone to lean on if need be. These are some of the hardest working people you will ever meet. You know they will do anything they possibly can first before having to ask the government for aid. These are the honest, true Americans who have sustained this nation for hundreds of years; therefore, there should be no hesitation when it comes to providing a strong backbone for them if they ever need to rely on it.

It is evident that this farm bill lies true and dear to my heart and always will. My future career relies heavily on this bill and without this funding; I can honestly say that it will be a devastating loss to millions of people. This is not just some small bill looking for some fame in Washington; this bill has the potential to change millions of peoples' lives. We all need and rely on food; therefore, everyone in this country will be affected if this bill does not receive adequate funding. I will continue to advocate in honor of this bill and know I have hundreds of friends, family and co-workers who will do the same. Thank you for this opportunity, stay strong and together we can make this happen.

Thank you,

Michelle Babin,
Dietetic Intern.

Comment of Lia Babitch

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:22 p.m.

City, State: Copake, NY

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Vegetables

Size: 301-500 acres

Comment: It's time for real reform that does not favor huge farms that have damaging environmental and social practices, but makes the marketplace fair and reasonable for all farmers, and doesn't favor size. Small farms, like other small businesses, where the jobs are, if small farmers aren't discriminated against, and struggling to survive. It's also time to stop subsidizing unhealthy foods, while people growing the things we should be eating can hardly make ends meet, and the cheapest food is the worst for us all, and making us fat and sick, and costing us lots of money in healthcare.

Comment of Bonnie Bach-Mitchell

Date Submitted: Saturday, April 28, 2012, 8:17 a.m.

City, State: Cincinnati, OH

Occupation: Artist/Writer & Activist

Comment: Farming is a hard profession. They need all the help and assistance they can get--stop messing around w/ the farming people--they need your help--and after all--they vote too! Please don't mess them up--protect 'farming' what do we have left? They are the people of the Earth! They feed the rest of us too!

Bonnie Bach-Mitchell.

Comment of Peggy Backup

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:25 p.m.

City, State: Redwood Valley, CA

Occupation: Plant Pathologist

Comment: I am a former farmer and current backyard and community gardener. We no longer need commodity crops to be subsidized, and we can't afford them. We need to grow more fruit, vegetables, nuts, and we need to do it locally and sustainably. Put the farm bill money into helping local communities regain their food security, helping farmers take care of the environment, and creating a more healthy diet for all of us.

Comment of Crystal Bacon

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:58 p.m.

City, State: Bryn Mawr, PA

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: Please do what's right to protect our land, air and water by putting money into small, ecologically viable and responsible farms producing organic, local food. We have the capacity to feed all of our people and protect our land. No more agribusiness and factory farms!

Comment of David Bacon

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 2:11 p.m.

City, State: Santa Fe, NM

Occupation: Energy Consultant

Comment: Healthy, thriving family farms and ranches is not a left/right issue, it is a human survival issue. Here's hoping our corporate congress critters can pull out of the mega ag gravity field to do the right thing for every single American, plus our precious soil and water.

Comment of Pat Bacon

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 10:26 a.m.

City, State: Milan, NH

Occupation: Registered Nurse

Comment: It is a travesty that in America our farmed food sources are horror's. The treatment of the farm animals is absolutely beyond belief. How can these people do the things they do? Please make big changes and make America a country to be proud of in it's treatment of all animals and livestock.

Comment of Taylor Bacon

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:13 p.m.

City, State: Tempe, AZ

Occupation: Student in School of Design

Comment: It is required that the ingredients be labeled on prepared foods. Truth is, those ingredients listed are worthless without knowing the ingredients or the makeup of those ingredients. I have dealt with many illnesses because of a lack of integrity in foods. I am not even referring to fast food, prepared or packaged food. I am referring to "whole food" supposedly "unadulterated" foods in the produce department. Not to say that all of my health issues are strictly a result of modified products, however, it certainly initiated and prolonged my extensive digestive and hormone issues. Please, help put the fear I have for my children, family, and future generations at ease by at least labeling the source and treatment methods of the foods currently on the shelves. It is common knowledge we as consumers deserve to know. If there is a concern that people will not buy the products if they are labeled with such information, then the argument would be that they should not be sold for human consumption and nourishment to begin with. Thank you! I do hope that you hear me, at just 21 years of age, and my plea to simply be informed not only for my own sake, but to save future generations and teach health and food's purpose nourish.

Comment of Willard Bacon

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:31 p.m.

City, State: Newport News, VA

Occupation: Retired Federal Civil Service Employee

Comment: You people are suppose to be looking out for the health and safety of the foods we Americans consume. You are negligent and remiss in fulfilling your responsibilities. Big Money has bought and paid for you and your decisions. It's high time all of you were fired. Trained monkeys could do a better job.

As Americans paying your salaries, we have the right to know what we are eating and whether or not it has been genetically modified or

genetically manipulated. It should be up to us whether or not we want to buy and consume products so created.

Comment of Birke Baehr

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:21 p.m.

City, State: Knoxville, TN

Occupation: Student, Youth Advocate, Future Organic Farmer

Comment: I am writing to ask that more funding is given to small farmers who are organic or in transition to organic. The future of agriculture needs to go back to taking care of the soil and growing organic nutrient dense food without genetically modified organisms (seeds, etc.) Funding should go to help farmers with pasture based livestock and even growing non-GMO and organic supplemental feed for poultry and pork. I speak to groups all the time who tell me that this is what they want from American agriculture. We need more small local Biodiverse farms and less monocultures.

Comment of Patricia Baehr

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:26 p.m.

City, State: Knoxville, TN

Occupation: Stay-at-Home Mother

Comment: I urge the support of organic farming research to continue and grow in addition to assist beginning farmers to get started to continue to grow local food systems. We need more biodiverse farms growing chemical free food locally for the future of this country and the health of our children. I support less funding for chemical agriculture including genetically modified and genetically engineered livestock and seeds and more for organics.

Comment of Nancy Baer

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:47 a.m.

City, State: Pickens, SC

Occupation: Health Care Administrator

Comment: I know my tea party congressman Jeff Duncan will be all about cutting spending in the wrong places. Stop subsidies to agribusiness conglomerates and CAFOs and take steps to support small farmers and local production by fully funding programs that support beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, organic farming, regional farm and food economies, and rural development. We need more farmers and ranchers, more sustainable food production, and more economic opportunity in our food system.

Comment of Ron Baginski

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:13 p.m.

City, State: Cleveland, OH

Occupation: Marketing

Comment: Stop all crop subsidies and let the market decide what is best. All GMO crops and foods must be labeled clearly on all products so consumers make the choice.

Comment of Hayley Bagwell

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 4:33 p.m.

City, State: Longmont, CO

Occupation: Health Care Industry

Comment: We deserve to have the information we need to make educated decisions about our food! We also deserve to be able to support farmers and agriculture that is honest, healthy and safe; not corrupt and bullied. Label it and let us decide!

Comment of Freddah Bahl

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:11 p.m.

City, State: Marietta, GA

Occupation: Retail (Grocery Store)

Comment: I've been a "health nut" for many years. It's disgusting to see all the CRAP that is allowed to go into our food. We've been lied to about many, many things.

Stop the lies! Stop big farms from bullying and putting out of business smaller organic and family run farms. Stop Monsanto! Stop genetically modified food! (Why has Monsanto been banned in 38 countries, one of which is Not the United States? Oh yes, Money!) Support Organic Farming and healthy food!

Comment of B. Bailey

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 11:49 a.m.

City, State: Cincinnati, OH

Occupation: Homemaker

Comment: I find it very disturbing that as a consumer I am being denied the right to know how my food is being produced and what is being fed to the animals to produce it. It should be everyone's right to know what they are eating or what they are feeding their families. Large agribusiness answers to no one, lobbyists are killing family farms and small businesses across our nation because they can. You, our representatives can change that. We ask you to support change for our local farmers, especially those who choose to use organic methods of farming. If we don't take control of our food supplies now and care for our environment in a responsible way what are we telling future generations? How are we going to live long enough to right this wrong?

Comment of Larissa Bailey

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 8:42 a.m.

City, State: Novelty, OH

Occupation: Homemaker

Comment: Please don't allow companies like Monsanto to control our food supply. Make it illegal to use genetically modified seed to grow the food we eat.

Comment of Marcia Bailey

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 2:24 p.m.

City, State: Dunedin, FL

Occupation: Retired Social Worker

Comment: I would like the farm bill to support the growing of fruits and vegetables. We really need to change the way our population is eating because of the high incidences of diabetes and obesity. These diseases cost us millions in health care, and they are fueled by the fact that the government subsidizes corn for cheap corn syrup, wheat for cheap baked goods, soybeans for cheap oil for frying, etc. Let's support the foods that will make our citizens healthier instead of those which make us sicker.

Comment of Melissa Bailey

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:19 a.m.

City, State: Kinston, NC

Occupation: Migrant Education Program Recruiter

Comment: You should know that the level of oppression among farmworkers is becoming unsustainable. Those of us who have spent years on this side of agriculture have never seen them so oppressed and agitated. Consider that when crafting your legislation. You are quickly reaching the tipping point in North Carolina.

Comment of Tina Bailey

Date Submitted: Friday, March 16, 2012, 9:26 a.m.

City, State: Alva, FL

Occupation: Homemaker

Comment: Please don't let big ag take over. I love the KMF campaign. I know what goes into the food I eat. I'm taking care of my local community. Together we're taking care of and treating our land with respect. I don't trust big ag to do the same.

Comments of Vicki Bailey

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:14 p.m.

City, State: El Dorado, KS

Occupation: Grandmother

Comment: Growing children regardless of their economic status HAVE to have good food to grow in a healthy way. We ALL pay the price for sick kids and families. Is Big Business more important than our Children and their families? It would seem so. Food stamps are one important way we currently have to provide them with food. What takes its place if it is taken away? Will agribusiness step in? Really?

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 09, 2012, 3:02 p.m.

Comment: My 90 year old mother lives in her own home but does not drive. Her daughters help her get her food but mom has friends who do not have family and have to patch together ways to get the things they need. My mother is still in good health because she can access good food. Some of her friends have not been nearly so lucky. Please consider carefully the food programs like SNAP, TEFAP & CSFP that help them stay healthy. This is so much more cost effective than winding up in a nursing home needing 24 hr. care!

Comment of Bobbi Bailin

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:09 p.m.

City, State: West Falmouth, MA

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: We need good healthy food for our children and healthy soil. Support organic methods that replenish the soil and non-GMO products that do not compromise health. Support needs to be given to farmers committed to this direction--they are smaller and require more hours and help, and this way of providing food and this lifestyle is severely threatened by big business.

Comment of Alta Baird

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012m 4:10 p.m.

City, State: Fallon, NV

Occupation: Retired

Comment: I am very Concerned about what is happening to our farmers as well as what is going on with our produce, I purchased some strawberries, I left some of them uneaten on purpose to see what would happen, they were left refrigerated for 3 weeks and they never did spoil they just withered, now I am old enough to know that is Not Normal. What is going on with our farmers and our produce is frightening. I Prefer Matural Organic Produce Please. Thank you,

Alta Baird.

Comment of Martha Baird

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 1:51 p.m.

City, State: Dallas, TX

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Many years ago I heard the U.S. would soon be out of food. It would be hard to realize this by looking at some of the people. The illegal's have gained weight after coming here, yet they keep producing children . . . at our countries expense; never once considering how the farming communities can keep producing food products. The poor farmer has had his hands tied by many of the farm bills. Help is needed from the Agriculture Committee to start assisting the farmer rather than holding him back!

Comment of Michael Baise

Date Submitted: Monday, March 26, 2012, 2:37 p.m.

City, State: Bloomington, IN

Occupation: Agricultural Advocate

Comment: Agriculture is critical to our national security. The next farm bill should include safety net provisions for agricultural producers who have numerous risks beyond their control, but in exchange for that tax-payer funded protection, farmers should be required to abide by conservation compliance for crop and/or revenue insurance.

Comment of Anita Baker

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:29 a.m.

City, State: Indianapolis, IN

Occupation: Business Development

Comment:

Support sustainable farming methods

Ensure good food for children in the schools including retaining breakfasts

Put in policies that support local farmers as well as organic farming

End subsidies for large food corporations like Archer Daniels especially the production of corn

Eliminate cruel animal practices like chickens being forced to overcrowd as well as livestock

Comment of Catherine Baker

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:34 p.m.

City, State: Lanesboro, MN

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Poultry/poultry products

Size: 151-300 acres

Comment: We need food access that is locally sustainable. Government regulation can and must encourage small producers and organic practices that do not answer to mass-production regulations--but relies for food safety instead on education, local transparency and personal responsibility to produce fresher, higher quality, less processed foods than are readily available now. Community kitchens that are supported by local buy-in and customer loyalty need funding and encouragement. A pilot in Lanesboro, MN would be a good starting place, as the community cohesiveness, mindset and work ethic are unparalleled.

Comment of Cynthia Baker

Date Submitted: Tuesday, April 10, 2012, 7:22 p.m.
City, State: Albuquerque, NM
Occupation: Nonprofit Supported Living
Comment: Please remember that due to a rough economy, we have more needy, hungry people than ever! Please do not forget them.

Comment of Jennifer Baker

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:32 p.m.
City, State: Las Vegas, NV
Occupation: Finance
Comment: I urge you to consider making 'farm to table' options more affordable and readily available to our schools and struggling families. It is extremely important that our children get the best food possible--hunger directly effects scholastic achievement. We live in the richest nation in the world and there is no reason our children, or any of our citizens, should go hungry!

Comment of Kathleen Baker

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 12:08 p.m.
City, State: Newcastle, OK
Occupation: Retired
Comment: I am deeply disturbed at policies being aimed at our American family farms. Big Agra has declared war on the family farmer and Washington is marching arm in arm with Big Agra to destroy those farms through legislation. We've have the best farmers in the world, please help them and not harm them. Thank you.

Comment of Keith Baker

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:33 p.m.
City, State: Cincinnati, OH
Occupation: Carpenter
Comment: As the population of the U.S.A. becomes more obese and less healthy, it is obvious that the other industrialized countries are doing something right. We should learn from them and let the health of the nation dictate the policies of the pending farm bill, not the profits of agribusiness.

Comment of Melanie Baker

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:08 p.m.
City, State: New York, NY
Occupation: Musician
Comment: Please write a bill that sustains the small farms, helps people get access to food who need it, keeps pesticides out of the food, and puts in place monitors on the big agribusiness farms, since that is where it is most needed. Thank you.

Comment of Nancy Baker

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:18 p.m.
City, State: Kalamazoo, MI
Occupation: Massage Therapist
Comment: I support our local farmers who operate in a safe manner. Many who are not educated do not have the awareness of what is going in their bodies. Everyone deserves to eat food that is not contaminated. Food keeps getting larger. Hormone fed. Yuck.
No wonder we have obesity. We are fed to many hormones and chemicals.

Comment of Patricia Baker

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 09, 2012, 3:25 p.m.
City, State: Laguna Hills, CA
Occupation: Pharmacist
Comment: I feel that the SNAP program is especially important to

children and seniors. Both these groups of citizens have large numbers who are at risk for hunger. Snap aids the nutrition of children so that they are better able to learn, and to aid seniors whose health is made better by better nutrition.

Comments of Rosalyn Baker Ingham

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:03 p.m.

City, State: Grand Rapids, MI

Occupation: Marriage and Family Therapist

Comment: There is nothing more important than healthy food. Please stop the poisoning of our children so we can decrease Autism--now one in 85.

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012 1:51 p.m.

Comment: Evidence is clear that the Autism rate of 1 in 85 has some relationship to the toxic food we eat. Please protect us adults but more importantly, you have a responsibility to protect our children.

Comment of Jennifer Baker-Trinity

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:06 p.m.

City, State: Beaver Springs, PA

Occupation: Writer, Musician, Stay-At-Home Parent

Comment: I encourage supporting organic farming and smaller, regional farms. I buy from local farms when possible and want to see these farms thrive so that our carbon-footprint is reduced. I support legislation that supports rural development and encourages more independent farms.

Comment of Jeri Bakhsh

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 3:54 p.m.

City, State: San Diego, CA

Occupation: Sales

Comment: Over the decades I've watched how corporate agribusiness has done great damage to small farmers and ranchers. I support the organic and local foods movements. You guys just can't keep up the corporate welfare. You really are destroying our great country.

Comment of Susan Bakke

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 7:47 p.m.

City, State: Lacey, WA

Occupation: Educator

Comment: I want all my food to be organic, non GMO, grown as locally as possible. This is what should be fostered in communities across the country. We save money, resources, decrease pollution by decreasing transportation, and our health is improved from fewer chemicals.

Comment of Nora Balduff; On Behalf of Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, Executive Director, Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 2:37 p.m.

Comment: May 20, 2012

House Committee on Agriculture
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Lucas, Ranking Member Peterson, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the upcoming farm bill reauthorization. Given the ever increasing need for food assistance in our state and the declining supply of Federal commodity support, I strongly urge you protect and strengthen nutrition programs in the 2012 Farm Bill.

The Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks is Ohio's largest charitable response to hunger. Our network represents 12 foodbanks, providing food, funding, training, and technical assistance to more than 3,300 food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and supplemental food providers.

We see every day how important Federal nutrition programs are in our community and how effectively they are working to ensure that Ohioans can provide enough food for their families. "In the last quarter of 2011, hungry Ohioans made 2,305,463 visits to our member food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters alone."

Nationally, the Feeding America network of more than 200 foodbanks has seen a 46 percent increase in foodbank clients from 2006 to 2010. In Ohio, our member foodbanks and member agencies have experienced a

23.6 percent increase in demand since 2009, with a 35.6 percent increase in demand from adults over the age of 60. Without strong farm bill nutrition programs like The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), foodbanks across the country would be struggling even more to meet the increased need.

We recognize the challenge you face drafting a farm bill in a time of deficit reduction, but we are also sensitive to the tremendous, ongoing need in our state. As such, we have two key priorities for the farm bill.

First, we urge you to strengthen TEFAP to help us keep up with increased demand. TEFAP supplies about 25 percent of the food moving through Feeding America's national network of foodbanks, and 27 percent of food distributed throughout Ohio. But because of high commodity prices, TEFAP food declined 30 percent last year, and our member foodbanks are struggling to make up the difference. We urge you to make TEFAP more responsive during times of high need by tying increases in mandatory funding to a trigger based on unemployment levels. We also propose to enhance the Secretary of Agriculture's authority to make TEFAP bonus purchases at times when the need for emergency food assistance is high--for example, during periods of high unemployment--in addition to times of weak agriculture markets so that the program can respond to both excess supply and excess demand.

Second, we also strongly urge you to protect SNAP from harmful funding cuts or policy proposals that would restrict eligibility or reduce benefits. SNAP has responded effectively to growing need during the recession with benefits that are timely, targeted, and temporary. The average SNAP household has an income of only 57 percent of the Federal poverty level, and 84 percent of benefits go to households with a child, senior, or disabled person. The program is working to support vulnerable Ohio families, and our foodbanks and local agency partners would not be able to meet the increased need for food assistance if SNAP were cut.

These programs have a real impact on your constituents, many of whom must rely on the foodbank and Federal nutrition programs to meet their basic food needs. I would encourage you to visit the foodbanks serving your district before the committee marks up a farm bill so you can meet the constituents standing in our food lines and see firsthand how Federal nutrition programs are working to protect vulnerable Americans from hunger.

The Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks believes that feeding our neighbors is a shared responsibility, and foodbanks like ours rely on a variety of food streams to support our communities, including generous support from partners in retail, manufacturing, and agriculture. However, the Federal government is an equally critical partner through programs like TEFAP, SNAP, and CSFP, and with tremendous, ongoing need in our state, Federal support is more important than ever.

As the House Agriculture Committee moves forward with farm bill reauthorization, the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks urges you to protect the nutrition safety net and offers the specific recommendations below.

Sincerely,

Lisa Hamler-Fugitt,
Executive Director,
Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks.
Feeding America Farm Bill Priorities

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP): TEFAP is a means-tested Federal program that provides food commodities at no cost to Americans in need of short-term hunger relief through organizations like foodbanks, pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency shelters. Nutritious food commodities provided through TEFAP are an essential resource for Feeding America foodbanks. As the demand for food remains high at foodbanks across the country, a continuous stream of TEFAP is necessary for the provision of a steady emergency food supply.

TEFAP commodities account for approximately 25 percent of the food moving through Feeding America foodbanks. Foodbanks combine TEFAP with private donations to maximize TEFAP benefits far beyond the budgeted amount for the program. In this way, foodbanks exemplify an optimum model of public-private partnership.

TEFAP has a strong impact on the farm economy. According to USDA's Economic Research Service, producers of commodities provided as bonus TEFAP (those purchased by USDA to intervene in weak agricultural markets) receive an estimated 85 cents per dollar of Federal expenditure. Producers of other commodities provided through TEFAP receive about 27 cents per dollar. By

contrast, only about 16 cents of every retail food dollar goes back to the farmer.

Declines in Section 32 funding and strong agriculture markets resulted in a 30 percent decline in TEFAP purchases during FY2011. This decline is expected to continue in FY2012 as foodbanks continue struggling to meet increased need. The shortfall between supply and demand will only worsen when the SNAP ARRA benefit boost expires, as many participants turn to foodbanks to make up for the reduction in benefit levels.

Farm Bill Priorities for TEFAP:

Make mandatory funding for TEFAP food more responsive to changes in need by providing a trigger that ties funding to unemployment levels

Enhance Secretary of Agriculture's authority to purchase bonus commodities in times of high need for emergency food relief in addition to times of low commodity prices so the program is responsive both to excess supply and excess demand

Reauthorize funding for TEFAP Storage and Distribution Funds at \$100 million per year

Reauthorize funding for TEFAP Infrastructure Grants at \$15 million per year

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): SNAP is the cornerstone of the nutrition safety net, providing over 46 million low-income participants nationally and 1.8 million Ohioans in February 2012. with monthly benefits via a grocery debit card. Eligibility is based on household income and is subject to work and citizenship requirements. SNAP is one of the most responsive safety net programs, expanding quickly to meet rising need during the recession. The program is targeted at our most vulnerable: 76 percent of SNAP households contain a child, senior, or disabled member, and 84 percent of all benefits go to these households.

As the number of people unemployed grew 110 percent from 2007 to 2010, SNAP responded with a 53 percent increase in participation over the same period. As the economy slowly recovers and unemployment begins to fall, SNAP participation and costs too can be expected to decline.

The SNAP accuracy rate of 96.19 percent (FY10) is an all-time program high. SNAP error rates declined by 61 percent in FY1999 to a record low of 3.81 percent in FY2010.

SNAP benefits supplement a household's food budget but are insufficient to last most participants through the month, causing many participants to rely regularly on foodbanks. Among Feeding America food pantry clients receiving SNAP benefits, over 1/2 (58 percent) reported having visited a food pantry in at least 6 months or more during the prior year.

The average SNAP household has a gross monthly income of \$731 and countable resources of \$333, consists of 2.2 persons, and participates in the program for 9 months. The average Ohioan participating receives a monthly benefit of \$138.00, or about \$1.50 per person per meal.

Farm Bill Priorities for SNAP:

Protect SNAP by opposing proposals to cap or reduce funding, restrict eligibility, reduce benefits, or otherwise impede access or benefit adequacy. Recent proposals to block grant the program would prevent it from responding effectively to fluctuations in need, and efforts to limit broad based categorical eligibility would increase administrative costs and access barriers.

Restore the cut to the SNAP ARRA benefit boost used to pay for the 2010 child nutrition bill and phase out the boost in a way that protects families from a cliff in benefit levels.

Encourage better nutrition by maintaining nutrition education, incentivizing the purchase of healthy foods, and ensuring that retailer standards balance adequate access to stores with access to a range of healthy foods and moderate

prices.

Build on SNAP's strong record of integrity and payment accuracy by issuing guidance to states on the eligibility of lottery winners and college students and upgrading resources and technology for trafficking prevention.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP): CSFP leverages government buying power to provide nutritious food packages to approximately 599,000 low income people each month, and 20,463 Ohioans. Nearly 97 percent of program participants are seniors with incomes of less than 130 percent of the poverty line (approximately \$14,000 for a senior living alone). Currently, 39 states and the District of Columbia participate in CSFP. Another six states (CT, HI, ID, MD, MA, & RI) have USDA-approved plans, but have not yet received appropriations to begin service.

CSFP is an efficient and effective program. While the cost to USDA to purchase commodities for this package of food is about \$20 per month, the average retail value of the foods in the package is \$50.

CSFP helps to combat the poor health conditions often found in seniors who are experiencing food insecurity and at risk of hunger. CSFP food packages, specifically designed to supplement nutrients typically lacking in participants' diets like protein, iron, and zinc, can play an important role in addressing the nutrition needs of low-income seniors.

Many seniors participating in CSFP are able to have their food boxes delivered directly to their homes or to seniors' centers nearby, an important benefit for those who are homebound, have limited mobility, or do not have convenient access to a grocery store.

Farm Bill Priorities for CSFP:

Transition CSFP to a seniors-only program by phasing out eligibility of women, infants, and children while grandfathering in current participants.

Comment of Mary Baldwin

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 3:29 p.m.

City, State: Bedford, OH

Occupation: Direct Marketing

Comment: I am so concerned about the subsidies paid factory farmers to the detriment of our health, environment and economy and that business holds sway over the average citizen. Please support sustainable agricultural practices, healthy livestock production and clean air and water.

Comment of Bessie Ballard

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:45 p.m.

City, State: Hoodspport, WA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: As an consumer who is very unhappy with the terrible produce we are getting in our markets . . . we are seniors on a fixed income with health issues and cannot afford to keep throwing spoiled vegetable away that are rotting and shriveling up within a day of purchase due to the horrible cancer and other deadly disease causing chemicals sprayed on our produce by Monsanto and Cargill. Please vote to give us chemical free food products in our markets. Please Vote Against Any Attempt To Continue The Deadly Spraying Of Our Food. Thank you very much.

Comment of Eusebius Ballentine

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 10:10 a.m.

City, State: Honesdale, PA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: The government ought to help the process that is already happening, they ought to pay attention and see what it is that people want and then aid them in attaining that goal. All the polls indicate how people want to have safer food and know where it comes from with less chemicals and is better for the environment. It's up to the government to not be tempted by corruption and money and simply do the

bidding of the people. It's going to happen either way and we can achieve a better food future now or later. If we choose the later we also increase our chances of devastating events that could derail humanity for a very long time. Do the right thing!

Comment of Anna Bandfield

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:25 p.m.

City, State: Port Orchard, WA

Occupation: Customer Service

Comment: Small farmers and organic farmers are supremely important, and they need and deserve appropriate funding. The problem with non-organic produce is not only the pesticides, it doesn't have any nutrition! Americans are overfed but malnourished--and have vitamin deficiencies because commercial produce lacks nutrition. Please don't cut funding for organics and beginning farmers.

Comment of Betty Banham

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 10:21 p.m.

City, State: Willits, CA

Occupation: Housewife

Comment: America could grow enough food to feed all of us and many third. world countries as well. Keep our farmers working. Get rid of GMO's, we have the knowledge for sustainable agriculture.

Comment of Gene Banister

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:07 p.m.

City, State: Wenagthee, WA

Occupation: Retired Engineer

Comment: As one who grew up on a farm, I am aware of how food is produced. I fully support the desire of people to make their own choice of what food to buy. There are risks with buying food directly from the farmer but there are also risks with buying food grown following government rules. I prefer to be able to buy directly from a person I trust. I do not trust bureaucrats to protect my food. Please allow people to take responsibility for their choices.

Comment of Brian Banks

Date Submitted: Thursday, March 22, 2012, 5:15 p.m.

City, State: Bowie, MD

Occupation: Director, Public Policy & Community Outreach

Comment: My annual salary is over \$70,000 a year. After I pay the basic bills, gas, haircut, school bills for son, and other needed items I can barely buy groceries for myself and son. However I always find a way, and no I am not eligible for any safety-net programs. However I work to get eligible people signed up for the programs that will help their families. My staff and I cannot work fast enough as the number of people at risk of hunger seem to rise daily for these people the farm bill is a vital importance to their lives. Food . . . we all need it to live, it is our most basic need and the one thing every living being has in common. People rely on these programs to live, these programs help people get back on their feet and because of these programs people are able to contribute to their community, children are able to learn, and less illness will come about because of a healthy diet. My question to you all is can you name the last five meals you ate, what did you have? How much did it cost? Do you know the price of a pound of grapes, or a gallon of milk? If not chances are you do not need the safety net programs and are not hungry. People that are need the safety-net. Please fund these programs at a high level, and review my suggestions below. Thank you.

Farm Bill Priorities for TEFAP:

Make mandatory funding for TEFAP food more responsive to changes in need by providing a trigger that ties funding to unemployment levels

Enhance Secretary of Agriculture's authority to purchase bonus commodities in times of high need for emergency food relief in addition to times of low commodity prices so the program is responsive both to excess supply and excess demand

Reauthorize funding for TEFAP Storage and Distribution Funds at \$100 million per year

Reauthorize funding for TEFAP Infrastructure Grants at \$15 million per year

Farm Bill Priorities for SNAP:

Protect SNAP by opposing proposals to cap or reduce funding, restrict eligibility, reduce benefits, or otherwise impede access or benefit adequacy. Recent proposals to block grant the program would prevent it from responding effectively to fluctuations in need, and efforts to limit broad based categorical eligibility would increase administrative costs and access barriers.

Restore the cut to the SNAP ARRA benefit boost used to pay for the 2010 child nutrition bill and phase out the boost in a way that protects families from a cliff in benefit levels.

Encourage better nutrition by maintaining nutrition education, incentivizing the purchase of healthy foods, and ensuring that retailer standards balance adequate access to stores with access to a range of healthy foods and moderate prices.

Build on SNAP's strong record of integrity and payment accuracy by issuing guidance to states on the eligibility of lottery winners and college students and upgrading resources and technology for trafficking prevention.

Farm Bill Priorities for CSFP:

Transition CSFP to a seniors-only program while grandfathering in current participants to promote greater efficiencies and recognize CSFP's evolution to serving a primarily senior population.

Comment of Carter Bannerman

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:51 p.m.

City, State: Seattle, WA

Occupation: Retired Broadcast Engineer

Comment: I eat. So do you. We need strict standards for organic growing, and there is almost no economy of scale for it past a pretty small farm. Do not allow agribusiness to weaken the standards. Please, stern and scientifically reasonable standards and universally safe growing and food.

Comment of Lynnet Bannion

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:07 p.m.

City, State: Loveland, CO

Occupation: Manager of Food Cooperative

Comment: Please stop giving billions to large corporations to grow GMO commodities, and start supporting small farmers, family farms, organic and healthy foods.

Comment of Matthew Bansfield

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 7:39 a.m.

City, State: Worcester, MA

Occupation: Carpenter, Small Business Owner

Comment: I support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

While Congress is looking to get rid of direct payments to commodity farmers, the subsidized insurance program it proposes to replace it with will allow giant commodity farmers and insurance companies to walk away with billions in taxpayer dollars while putting the land, soil and environment at greater risk.

Most importantly, however, organics are the future.

Sincerely,

Matthew Bansfield.

Comment of Margaret G. Banta

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 6:22 p.m.

City, State: Topeka, KS

Occupation: Retired

Comment: I don't like Monsanto choosing the food my family can eat, e.g., GMO's. I want more inspectors at factory farms. I want more support for small family farms and organic farmers. It's a matter of Homeland Security and public health. Thank you!

Comment of Daniel Barach

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:34 p.m.

City, State: Oswego, NY

Occupation: College Professor of Music

Comment: It is time to write a bill that is helpful to small local farms that are producing high quality food of an organic nature that is friendly to the environment and healthy for the individuals that eat them. It is time to stop subsidizing big agribusinesses that pollute our environment and soil and that devastates our health. We need to invest in non chemical healthful farming practices that build health and our soil.

Comment of Marsh Barbara

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:49 p.m.

City, State: Anchorage, AK

Occupation: Small Business Owner of Soap Company

Comment: Please look carefully at preserving the health of our food supply by keeping it chemical free and non GMO. Support our farmers and farm workers, not the big agribusiness and lobbyists that get the corporation's the best deal on the backs of the consumers. Our health depends on a good, clean, healthy food supply.

Comment of Kyle Barber

Date Submitted: Thursday, March 29, 2012, 5:53 p.m.

City, State: Hamilton, MT

Occupation: Conservation & Stewardship @ Bitter Root Land Trust

Comment: Over the past 2 years, the Bitter Root Land Trust has partnered with 5 agricultural producers to protect over 1,000 acres of working landscape in the Bitterroot Valley. These projects were voluntarily initiated by the landowners and funded in part by the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP), a program of the farm bill. The compensation provided to the landowners by the FRPP has supported the local and regional economy in a number of ways, from circulating through the agricultural services sector to allowing landowners to expand their operations. The FRPP program helps perpetuate the scenic, economic and cultural values of Western Montana's landscape. Please support continued funding to this program in the upcoming farm bill re-authorization. This program means a lot to your constituents.

Comment of Kiley Barbero

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 17, 2012, 4:05 p.m.

City, State: Port Angeles, WA

Occupation: Interpretive Park Ranger

Comment: Now is the time for action! Every 5 years Congress reauthorizes the National farm bill, which gives massive taxpayer subsidies to huge farms growing unhealthy food using toxic chemicals. We have the opportunity to transform Federal farm and food policy--take action Now! WE want farm policy that helps family farmers produce healthy food, vibrant communities and sustains the environment. Please vote for our citizens!

Comment of Jeannine Bardo

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:03 p.m.

City, State: Brooklyn, NY

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: Congressman Grimm,

Please consider the long term health of our food system and our citizens. An ethical, sustainable farm community will help to ensure the quality of our food remains high and our land will not be poisoned and laid to waste. Access to nutritious food should be an American right for everyone. A healthy citizenry is the best way to cut health care costs substantially. Please use principled and creative foresight

when making budgetary decisions for your constituents.

I support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Comment of Genevieve Barile

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:39 p.m.

City, State: Seattle, WA

Occupation: L.M.P.

Comment: Healthy food is essential to our well being. Our country is showing the serious effects of ignoring this fact. Healthy food should not be a luxury--it is a basic need for every person.

Comment of Cate Barker

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:23 p.m.

City, State: Cedar Rapids, IA

Occupation: Advertising Writer

Comment: I have a couple of suggestions:

1. Reduce farm subsidies;
2. Convert crop insurance from an income guarantee for already profitable agribusinesses to a hedge for family farmers against catastrophic crop failure;
3. Use the savings to reduce Federal debt and fund programs that improve human health (e.g., increased SNAP benefits) and the environment (reduce soil erosion, protect drinking water by reducing pesticide runoff).

Comment of Dwinna Barker

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:28 p.m.

City, State: Crowley, TX

Occupation: Disabled Legal Secretary

Comment: Just one rule of thumb to go by on the safety of our food is that if it is produced by cruelty and inhumane treatment of animals or if it is genetically altered to the point that we don't even know what we are eating anymore, it is probably not good for humans to consume!

Comment of Timothy R. Barksdale

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:43 p.m.

City, State: Choteau, MT

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Forestry

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: When my father lost his 7,500 acre farm in 1969, my parents divorced. Since my background now includes financial, agriculture, wildlife ecology and more my suggestion is to shift the farm bill to support small family farms more. I ask you to support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Each of these adds to important revisions in our current direction.

Thank you,

Timothy R. Barksdale,
Choteau, MT.

Comment of Claire Barnett

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 8:49 p.m.

City, State: Hillsdale, NJ

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: It is time to stop supporting agribusiness and instead support small-scale, family-owned farms. We need to encourage sustainable agricultural practices for long-term viability.

Comment of Tracy Barnett

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 02, 2012, 6:35 p.m.

City, State: San Antonio, TX

Occupation: Journalist

Comment: Please support a strong farm bill--one that supports organic and independent producers, and one that provides support to the needy among us through programs such as TEFAP, SNAP and CSFP. Thank you!

Comment of Tom Barney

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:13 p.m.

City, State: Jacksonville, FL

Occupation: Healthcare

Comment: Please help us to remove the fine that organic producers have to pay to do the right thing and put a Heavy Fine on the factory farm and commercial food production industry for all of their pollution, poison and land damage. We need to get the subsidies redirected from those damaging our lives and put them toward those doing the right thing. Thank you.

Comment of Debbie Barr

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 6:42 p.m.

City, State: Concord, MA

Occupation: Senior Services Program Manager

Comment: It is essential for our health to broaden support for organic farmers in the farm bill.

I ask for your full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Equally important is to maintain the level of funding for SNAP. I work with an Area Agency on Aging, and the Meals on Wheels program is all that keeps some of our seniors from serious hunger . . . it is runs at a deficit.

It is simply wrong to continue big ag subsidies and eliminate programs for our most vulnerable elders.

I ask you to fully fund conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and continue to support new entry farmer programs.

Comment of Roger Barr

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 11:15 p.m.

City, State: North Fork, CA

Occupation: Volunteer

Comment: Our farm bill is grossly counter to the needs of the American people. By primarily subsidizing the production of corn and soy we are only benefiting agribusiness to the detriment of everyone else, and the detriment of our environment. We need to move away toward more natural production methods.

Comment of Lisha Barre

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 12:17 a.m.

City, State: Boulder, CO

Occupation: Physician

Comment: As a physician I am sick of watching my patient's grow sicker and fatter on the processed garbage promoted by Big Food. Support for this bill is essential to preserving the health of our nation.

Comment of Carlos Barrio

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:36 p.m.

City, State: Chicago, IL

Occupation: Software

Comment: The government should do everything it can to promote the production of a wide variety of food, not just yellow corn. It should begin infrastructure development for farming capability without fossil fuels, food prices should not be influenced by OPEC. There should be a big push to have food production, especially meat, scale back its use of water. Development of sustainable U.S. based energy infrastructure and water conservation should be the top priority. Do not leave for tomorrow what can be done today.

Comment of Barbara Barry

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:51 p.m.

City, State: Woodinville, WA

Occupation: Organic Gardener

Comment: Please do not sell out to Monsanto and Con Agra!

Our country need small farmers who support local communities with laws and protection from Big Chema and Big Agra. We are watching how you vote and who you are serving, the citizens of the United States or Citizens United! Do not pander to your lobbyists!

Comment of Kathryn Barry

Date Submitted: Thursday, March 29, 2012, 8:30 p.m.

City, State: Suffern, NY

Occupation: Retired Educator

Comment: As you know this bill is terribly important for both the present and future health of our people and our land.

Please subsidize only non-food renewable energy sources e.g., switch grass, algae etc. Subsidizing food renewable energy sources, e.g., corn, grossly distorts our food supply costs.

Please shift some of the commodity subsidies given to corporate farms to small family farmers growing fruit and vegetable crops. This will give us better and more stable, local food sources saving energy and providing a healthier food supply.

Please do not cut any of the nutrition programs such as SNAP. There are so many more hungry people these last 3 years. To cut these necessary programs--which today do not fully meet their needs--to still lower levels is unthinkable.

Comment of Kenneth Barta

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 1:21 a.m.

City, State: Spotswood, NJ

Occupation: Retired

Comment: End subsidies to big Agra. Subsidize instead Organic Farming. Get rid of Monsanto GM junk. Stop subsidizing ethanol. Stop polluting farm land and crops with toxic herbicides and pesticides. Stop factory farming of animals and the pollution they cause in waterways. Get better inspection of food and meat. Stop harassing raw milk producers.

Comment of Bob Bartell

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:56 p.m.

City, State: Snohomish, WA

Occupation: Sales

Comment: We need support for real farmers. Big Ag with its unlabeled GMO crops puts us at risk. Can't buy food in the store without wondering if it is healthy or a Frankenfood. My family has resorted to growing our own vegetables as much as possible because of this.

Comment of Lee Bartell

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:24 a.m.

City, State: New York, NY

Occupation: Retired Teacher

Comment: Farm policy needs to focus on actual farmers, Not on the multinational corporate farms. Organic farmers need to know that there's no GMO seeds blowing onto their land, and that there's help when catastrophe comes.

Comment of Richard Bartels

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:19 p.m.

City, State: Pineville, KY

Occupation: College Faculty Member

Comment: Dear Mr. Rogers,

I realize that budget cuts are having to be a reality that all of us must live with. As changes are made in farm subsidies, please make sure that conservation gains made through various cooperative stimulators for farmers do not get washed away because the new provisions don't make the conservation connections. Having good water is essential to all of us (farmers included) so please make sure that the farmers have the necessary incentives to keep our water sources clean and safe.

Thank you and thanks again for your years of faithful service to the people of the Fifth Congressional district.

Richard Bartels.

Comment of Kathy Barton

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:00 p.m.

City, State: Northport, NY

Occupation: Business Owner

Comment: I want all food to be labeled with all ingredients and I want GMO's to be eliminated. I also want the farmers to stop being harassed because of the government being in bed with Monsanto. It is ridiculous and it doesn't take into effect the people. I also want organic foods to be more readily available.

Comment of Duncan Baruch

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 1:20 a.m.

City, State: Portland, OR

Occupation: Library Clerk

Comment: The writers of the next farm bill must heed the wishes of the majority of American citizens, not the wishes of the few who run Big Agriculture. Americans want healthful foods, foods without GMOs and poisons. Organic foods grown by small farmers. Foods produced with next to no impact on climate. No factory foods.

To make the above, positive changes will take a drastic and courageous effort away from the current model. Now is the time.

Comment of Alma Baruth

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:27 p.m.

City, State: Mesa, AZ

Occupation: Housewife

Comment: They are taking away "Job" from American People-- citizens or Not . . . they are working to keep U.S. of A. going . . . then take the "price" of "shipping and handling from overseas" . . . then they (Jack) up the Prices on Us . . . U.S.A. Citizens . . . And The 'Growers' . . . 'Producers' Are The Ones Who Make The Big Money . . . On Us . . . !

Comment of Andrea Basche

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:27 p.m.

City, State: Ames, IA

Occupation: Graduate Student in Crop Production

Comment: A great economic opportunity exists in localized markets and smaller producer infrastructure. This cannot happen without more resources from the farm bill directed toward beginning farmers, access to credit and land, insurance for non row crop agriculture. Young people in places like Iowa Want to manage the land differently but lack the ability to enter into this capital intensive field. The FB policies could be directed toward the right rural development and not more of the same.

Comment of Stuart Basden

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:20 p.m.

City, State: Chicago, IL

Occupation: Web Developer

Comment: Agricultural subsidies need to be reversed, so that they encourage the small- to mid-sized farms, encourage sustainable farming practices, and encourage farmers to protect their land. We need to tax those farms that damage the land, whether through factory farms, mega-ranches, or monocropping.

Our farmland needs diversity to be robust and stable, and with the growing unpredictability of the climate, we need to make our food more secure. The way to do this is by banning monocropping, and encouraging seed diversity and crop diversity.

Comment of Jane Basler

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 16, 2012, 10:17 p.m.

City, State: Saint Louis, MO

Occupation: Director of Construction Management

Comment: Help the small farmers survive and allow for diversity and choices besides corporate Agribusiness. Continue to provide 30 million to small disadvantaged farmers. America was built by farming communities!

Thank you for your attention to this matter and consideration!

Jane Basler.

Comment of Carol Bason

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:22 p.m.

City, State: Santa Barbara, CA

Occupation: Psychotherapist

Comment: The food system in the United States is deeply broken. Subsidies are paid for products which become cheaply priced junk food (corn and soy), producing monumental health problems and obesity, while "real food" (fruits and vegetables) become more and more expensive. Small organic farms are pushed to the brink, while agribusiness holds all the power and money. I have very little hope that Members of the House of Representative will change this situation as you are addicted to the money which comes to you from large corporations.

Comment of Virginia Bastone

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:45 p.m.

City, State: Hawthorne, NY

Occupation: Teacher & Nutritionist

Comment: Pesticides affect our youth's nervous system . . . Why do we have to continue to poison our food system? Please consider safer alternatives that are not toxic.

Choosing safer alternatives would also reduce health care costs since there would be less toxins in our food cycle. Thank you for considering alternatives. Studies have also shown more nutrients are retained when food is grown organically. Our bees would continue to pollinate fruits and vegetables. Thank you again for strengthening our farm bill to create better health for our nation!

Comment of Annette Batchelor

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:46 p.m.

City, State: Newcastle, CA

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: Our country needs legislation to protect against chemicals in our food and will benefit from a fair and healthy farm bill. Please do the right thing and support the Organic Farm Bill and also fight big companies such as Monsanto to label our foods GMO when used in our food.

Comment of Diane Bates

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:05 p.m.

City, State: Booneville, MS

Occupation: Disabled

Comment: Set policy that encourages small family farms and limits big corporate farming. Outlaw all genetically altered food, eliminate use of pesticides, herbicides and fungicides. Outlaw hybrid seeds. Get farming back to nature's way; organic, rotating crops, replenishing the soil nutrients, seed bearing crops, etc.

Comment of Jackie Battreal

Date Submitted: Tuesday, May 15, 2012, 8:43 a.m.

City, State: Irving, TX

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Fruits, Livestock, Nuts, Vegetables, Other

Size: 50-150 acres

Comment: I would like to have or know of incentives for second generation farmers who inherit their parents' property. My dad was a rancher until his death in 1997. My 91 year old mother has continued to live there but has leased the property for income and tax benefits. I will inherit the property and would like to have it producing a profit as I lost my job last year and at my age of over 60 have not been able to find other employment.

Are there programs for me as a woman and second generation farm owner to help me develop the farm for income?

Thank you.

Comment of Berenice Bauer

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:16 p.m.

City, State: Glen Ellyn, IL

Comment: Although I am not a farmer nor do I deal in farm products other than as a consumer. I feel that whatever is put into a farm bill it should include the study of organic crops. I feel that the more we use genetically altered foods the more dangerous our foods become to humans. How to get the most from organic crops should be of primary concern.

Comment of Chante Bauer

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:34 p.m.

City, State: Lincoln, NE

Occupation: Nonprofit

Comment: In the upcoming farm bill, please place emphasis on small-scale farmers versus large industrial farming practices. We as a country need to focus on environmentally sustainable agriculture practices that do not utilize mono-culture crops; heavy use of pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides; GMO seed; fossil-fuel burning equipment; and 1,000+ mile transit of foods. Staple crops like corn and soybeans should not be heavily subsidized. Additionally, Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) needs to be replaced with grass-fed cattle and pasture-raised pork and chickens. The current farming infrastructure is depleting our natural capital, while giving preferential treatment to large industrial farming corporations. I urge you to transfer this infrastructure to empower the small-scale farmer who acts as nurturer and steward of our food and our planet.

I thank you for your thoughtful consideration in this matter.

Comment of Katya Bauer

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:56 p.m.

City, State: New York, NY

Occupation: Artist

Comment: America at its core is about small farmers who have always understood what sustainability means. Without respect for the land, there is no food and no future. It's that simple.

Comment of Leslie Bauer

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 10:21 p.m.

City, State: Austin, TX

Occupation: Nutritional Educator and Chef

Comment: Folks, we are running out of time. Now, more than any other time in the history of this planet, we need to make serious changes in how we produce food, how we share food and how much energy we need to produce whole foods! We are Dying as a nation because we are not grasping the problem at the core of the nutritional level. We need organic, nutrient dense foods that truly nourish the human body. We need to put animals back on pasture, where they belong, eating grass to make the fats, protein and nutrients that we need; no more manmade crap that is killing us! No pesticides, herbicides, hormones, GMO's, artificial flavorings, rancid fats, toxic poisons in our food, our air, our soil, our water! Wake Up Folks, we are dying with all of these horrific poisons in our world and we can make the changes that we need to be healthy. Big agribiz has strangled this nation and the people we elect are in accordance with their lies. Wake Up and know that we have a responsibility here, to ourselves and each other, to do the very best we can with what our Earth has provided for us. We have poisoned ourselves enough, and the evidence is everywhere; cancer, heart disease, diabetes, obesity . . . you name it, we have created it with our lack of care towards our planet and all her gifts of abundance.

We elect you officials to actually Care and educate yourselves about the issues, not be paid off for what? You will still have to eat these poisoned foods, breathe this toxic air, drink polluted water. DO you not `get it` yet? Are you really all that stupid? Or are you all just lying to yourselves and selling out to the rest of us? It is more than tragic, and just plain disgusting what has happened over the past 60 years in this country. People are so hurting, so confused, so angry at what is going on, and you people, those in power, have the ability to Lead the people of this great nation! Start with the most fundamental of all the issues, with our food. If you do not, then I hope you have found another planet to go to. Mother Earth has had just about enough of the poison and cannot take much more of it. There is no question in my mind that we are rapidly destroying ourselves and we need radical changes made to our farm bill if we are to survive. Wake Up and do your jobs and make the necessary changes that will Help our great nation!

Comment of Rachel Bauer

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 7:45 a.m.

City, State: Memphis, TN

Occupation: University Professor

Comment: Please fight to maintain the EQIP Organic Initiative and do all that you can to endorse local foods and farms. It is also extremely important to me that beginning farmers/ranchers are supported--I firmly believe that big agribusiness needs to be reined in because they are rapidly causing the decline of food standards here in the U.S. Big agribusiness has a stranglehold on American food--it needs to be controlled.

Comment of Helen C. Baum

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 6:17 p.m.

City, State: Manteo, NC

Occupation: Speech and Language Pathologist

Comment: It is of utmost importance that we protect our farm lands and produce organic foods. Every year we have more people in our country dying of cancer and other neurological diseases. We cannot afford to cause greater risk to our people, land and environment. How many people in our district do you know who have cancer or neurological diseases? That number grows daily. Please do your part to protect the people in your district!

Thank you,

Helen C. Baum.

Comment of Gail Bauman

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 09, 2012, 4:25 p.m.

City, State: Incline Village, NV

Occupation: Worker

Comment: In order for human beings to live they need to have water and food. Do you think it might be possible that the people that want to cut food programs have Never Been Hungry? Maybe if they went just one day without food they would realize the importance of food and how important it is for mental functioning, physical functioning and most important in order to Live! In my opinion the job of Government is to assist the people so that their lives can be as happy and healthy as possible?

Have a Beautiful Day!

Gail.

Comment of Joseph Baumann

Date Submitted: Friday, May 11, 2012, 1:35 p.m.

City, State: Cottonwood, AZ

Occupation: Retired

Comment: The farm bill should help and protect sustainable organic farmers. That includes protection via seed program and pesticide over-spraying from big agri producers such as Monsanto and there health untested GMO and pesticing plant DNA.

Comment of Susan Baumgartner

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 16, 2012, 3:46 p.m.

City, State: Waukesha, WI

Occupation: Mom

Comment: I want a farm bill that gives schools the means to feed kids whole fruits, grains, vegetables, dairy and meats that are grown by sustainable farms and not CFOs and monoculture-based corporations. I want money spent to promote farms that practice biodiversity and crop rotations. I want the government to support cutting-edge sustainable food production that supports health in people and the environment.

Comment of Jenn Baumstein

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:57 a.m.

City, State: Putnam Valley, NY

Occupation: Nonprofit Food Community Member

Comment: Hello,

I am both a small personal farmer and a member of a nonprofit that promotes local food production and education. We HAVE to work to make our farm bill sustainable and fruitful. Our students/constituents/clients are passionate about a world in where we can all have access to

good, clean food. It is Totally unacceptable for us to provide subsidies to farmers who help feed our ever fattening and lazy nation. We want to promote moving--eating--Living well. Supporting young farms, small family farms, young farmers is essential. Please think about all of us who are trying to get good food out there when making these decisions. We want our government's support, not their frowned eyebrows. Thank you.

Comment of Adrienne Moore Baxter

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:46 p.m.

City, State: Olathe, KS

Occupation: Registered Dietitian Licensed in Kansas and Missouri; Telehealth Provider; Clinical Instructor of Health Profession Students

Comment: About the Food and Farm Bill . . .

Please fund programs that support beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, organic farming, regional farm and food economies, and rural development.

We need more farmers and ranchers [most are as old as I am--60 years]. Kansans want more sustainable food production. Food service managers are seeking local producers prepared to sell to institutions whose customers want fresh food.

Build more economic opportunity in our food system; Support family farmers that really need help, not the biggest farms that don't: End subsidies (aka direct payments and countercyclical commodity programs), and replace them with loophole-free agriculture risk coverage. Additionally, implement a cap on crop insurance premium subsidies;

Ensure that limited conservation funding maximizes lasting environmental benefits: Limit funds to Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) for animal waste management infrastructure by eliminating the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Livestock Set-aside and protect the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) from disproportionate cuts. Improve CSP by ranking applications solely on their conservation benefits.

Comment of Jessica Baxter

Date Submitted: Monday, May 07, 2012, 2:40 p.m.

City, State: Tucson, AZ

Occupation: Food Banker

Comment: Please do not make cuts to the Federal feeding programs that support the most vulnerable members of our community. Children, seniors, working poor, and the homeless should not pay the price for the richest Americans to enjoy tax breaks. Feeding people is an American value. It is a human value. It is the right thing to do. From the far right to the far left--Americans support these feeding programs.

Emergency Food Boxes, Food Stamps, and CSFP are more necessary now than ever before. Do not cut these programs. Not now, and not ever.

Comment of Sandra Bayes

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:40 p.m.

City, State: Flagstaff, AZ

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Farm subsidy reform is badly needed now! We need to place limitations on crop insurance subsidies and to re-attach soil erosion and wetland conservation requirements to crop insurance programs.

It is time for the Federal government to start placing the health of it's citizens first rather than placing the monetary gain of large farm corporations first.

Comment of Laura Beach

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:13 p.m.

City, State: Yadkinville, NC

Occupation: Pastor

Comment: Before becoming a pastor, I worked on a small-scale, family farm that used sustainable methods of production. For the health of our people, our economy, and our land, please put measures in the farm bill that support sustainable agriculture and family farms. Write policies that increase access to good, healthy food for the most vulnerable in our society, not policies that increase the profits of agribusinesses that have created the health crises in our country.

Comment of David Beane

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:54 p.m.

City, State: Portland, ME

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: The House Agriculture Committee needs to realize that the American people want their food supply to be safe and healthy. This most definitely means protecting organic and healthy food subsidies.

Comment of George Beattie

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 1:29 a.m.

City, State: Decatur, GA

Comment: At a time when healthcare is of such critical importance in the life of our nation, nothing could be more germane to that issue than ensuring the highest standards of healthy foods and nutrition. A substantive, forward-thinking organic food bill is the lynchpin in establishing those standards. To the members of the Committee, this is your chance to really make a difference.

Comment of Kathleen Beaubien

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 11:39 a.m.

City, State: Farmington, ME

Occupation: Retired Teacher

Comment: I want a farm policy that encourages and supports small farms, family farms, organic farms, and that protects and replenishes the Earth, the water, and the air--not just in our country but all around the planet--one that respects the physical and economic realities of other countries. If used prudently, this Earth has the water, soil, and capability to sustain us all in a healthy way. We must use our best thinking to be good stewards of the earth--to preserve, protect and defend it from exploitation for economic gain without regard to its health or that of the people it supports and feeds.

Water is sacred, soil is sacred, and we need to protect and replenish these resources, fully aware of our impact, not just in our country, but upon the whole planet. It is, as you know, all connected.

Comment of Gretchen Beaubier

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 11:47 p.m.

City, State: Albuquerque, NM

Occupation: Homemaker

Comment: As a consumer, I am concerned with the availability of fresh, safe food available at the grocery stores. I want food labeled in a way that I can make rational and informed decisions about my purchases; GMO-content goods should be labeled as such.

I also believe that we must not solve our budget problems on the backs of those experiencing food insecurity, including our most vulnerable--our children, the elderly, and the disabled.

I firmly believe that we should create an even "plowing" field by fully funding programs that support beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, organic farming, regional farm and food economies, and rural development. We need more farmers and ranchers, more sustainable food production, and more economic opportunity in our food system.

We should support family farmers that really need help, not the biggest farms that don't: We must end subsidies (aka direct payments and countercyclical commodity programs), and replace them with loophole-free agriculture risk coverage. Additionally, implement a cap on crop insurance premium subsidies.

I do Not want us to continue with senseless subsidies for giant conglomerate farmers and feed-lot polluters.

I want Congress to ensure that limited conservation funding maximizes lasting environmental benefits: Limit funds to Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) for animal waste management infrastructure by eliminating the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Livestock Set-aside and protect the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) from disproportionate cuts, and improve it by ranking applications solely on their conservation benefits.

Comment of Mallory Beaudreau

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 16, 2012, 1:43 a.m.

City, State: Portland, OR

Occupation: Educational Counselor

Comment: The farm bill is an enormous opportunity to serve the people of the United States, and not corporate interests. Please bear in mind that an unprecedented number of Americans are using supplemental food aid, and this is often the only assistance they have

as they search for jobs. Meanwhile, subsidies are going to gigantic agricultural corporations to produce cash crops that are fueling diet-related diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Please remember that the spirit of the food bill is to grant access to healthy, nutritious food to Americans, and not to serve the greed of the few.

Comment of Kathy Beaulieu

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:05 p.m.

City, State: Fall River, MA

Occupation: Grandmother

Comment: Congress has changed nothing since 1975. There were the same problems with our food supply back then. Red food dye from Mexico was harming our food supply, too much sugar in cereal, too much advertising of unhealthy foods to children were prevalent back then. We need better labeling, no GMO allowed in our food supply, more food stamps for children and elderly.

Comment of Janet Beazlie

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 8:20 p.m.

City, State: Forestville, CA

Occupation: Gardening Teacher and Sustainability Consultant

Comment: We need to have a farm bill that meets the health & food needs of Americans and the small family farmers' needs. We need incentives for organic growing methods and for diverse crops. We need incentives for habitat and riparian restoration and conservation easements. We need incentives for clean energy farms with solar, wind, biomass, and other renewable, green energy. We need incentives to sequester carbon on farms and drop greenhouse gas emissions. We need to support farmland acquisition by young people. We need farming education for young adults and school gardens in K-12. We need to stop supporting large corporate farming agribusinesses from controlling U.S. agriculture. We need to have our seeds protected from GMOs and corporate control.

Comment of Daniel Beck

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 3:42 p.m.

City, State: Redondo Beach, CA

Occupation: Hazardous Waste Specialist

Comment: We need clean organic foods with no GMO's that give us cancer. We need non pesticide laced foods. We need good men, with sold morals representing us. We need people who work for a living making decisions for the people who work for a living, not money laundering fake lobbyist for large corporations with no pulse. We need the America that the world loved and looked to for guidance and help. We need are men to stop selling us out for short sighted dreams and the quick buck. We need my old ancestors back, because the new breed of American man is disgusting and Arrogant. We need a miracle to escape the morons running this country, and continually make the decisions. I support the following:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Comment of Marylin Beck

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:53 p.m.

City, State: Dedham, MA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: We need to know where our food is grown and that it is not filled with hormones and antibiotics. Local farmers are best at assuring the quality of their meat and produce. They should be allowed to butcher the meat they raise. They should be given subsidies to bring food to the many food deserts that exist in this country. Stop subsidizing Agribusiness.

Comment of Diane Becker

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:42 p.m.

City, State: Gillett, PA

Occupation: Homemaker, Gardener, Artist

Comment: There is nothing more important for the health of all Americans than a healthy food supply. That means foods produced without the use of hazardous chemicals and using organic methods. This is done very well on small family owned, local farms, and, I hope, for many in our own gardens. The small farms need protection from the corporations that seem to care nothing the environment we must all live in or for the American people in general.

Comment of Elaine Becker

Date Submitted: Friday, May 11, 2012, 4:04 p.m.

City, State: Roanoke, VA

Comment: Stop using the farm bill as Corporate Welfare for huge agribusiness. This is suppose to help Small farmers offer diverse produce to the public to help nutritional intake!

Comment of Elizabeth Beckman

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:06 p.m.

City, State: Florence, CO

Occupation: Website Designer, Marketing, Used Car Sales

Comment: Please discontinue all farm subsidies. The current policies result in corruption and flooding the market with cheap high fructose corn syrup which is making Americans obese.

Comment of Deanne Bednar

Date Submitted: Friday, May 11, 2012, 10:58 a.m.

City, State: Oxford, MI

Occupation: Sustainability Educator

Comment: We need and want food systems that support small farmers, value-added, organic systems. In order to meet our needs now without diminishing the ability of the future to meet their needs we absolutely need non-toxic and economically friendly food production.

Submitted Statement by Barry Bedwell, President, California Grape & Tree Fruit League

The California Grape & Tree Fruit League (League) is a voluntary, nonprofit agricultural trade association that represents fresh grapes, berries and deciduous tree fruit grown in California. CGTFL is the key public policy organization that represents the needs and interests of its members by advocating on legislative and regulatory issues, at state, Federal, and international levels. On behalf of our membership, I thank you for the opportunity to discuss the current farm bill reauthorization effort and am encouraged to work with you to ensure adequate recognition of California's specialty crop sector.

The League is a Steering Committee member of the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance, a national coalition of more than 130 organizations representing growers of fruits, vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, nursery plants and other products. The Alliance was established to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crop agriculture and improve the health of Americans by broadening the scope of U.S. agricultural public policy.

The Alliance successfully advocated for a 2008 Farm Bill that for the first time made a strong investment in specialty crops. The bill included provisions that helped the U.S. specialty crop industry compete and grow in domestic and global markets. It assisted specialty crop producers in many areas, including:

Establishing a Specialty Crop Research Initiative to develop and disseminate science-based tools to address the needs of specialty crop producers.

Increasing funding for state-level specialty crop grants that focus on local, regional and statewide programs to enhance producers' ability to compete in the marketplace and provide consumers with safe, abundant food.

Enhancing critical trade assistance and market promotion tools that will grow international markets for specialty crops.

Investing in prevention and mitigation programs and tools to combat invasive pests and diseases, which cost the U.S. economy billions of dollars per year.

The California Grape & Tree Fruit League, as part of the Alliance

effort, stresses the importance and desire to continue the strong investment in specialty crops in the 2012 Farm Bill reauthorization effort. With release of farm bill legislative language by the Senate Agriculture Committee we are encouraged by the intent to continue investments in many important areas. However, it is imperative that as the debate shifts to the House, your advocacy on the House Agriculture Committee protects the following areas, as well as, serves to support other vital components of the legislation (as recommended by the Alliance):

Title III--Trade:

Market Access Program (MAP):

Policy Recommendation--The Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance, representing a broad range of interest and participants in the Market Access Program, supports the Coalition to Program U.S. Agricultural Exports to maintain funding for MAP at no less than \$200 million per year.

Mandatory Funding--\$200 million per year (\$1 billion over 5 years); Senate language contains \$200 million per year mark.

With over forty percent of fresh table grapes and approximately 20 percent of tree fruit going to markets outside the U.S., the Market Access Program with a proven track record of success is a key and vital component that should be maintained at the \$200 million per year level. A program with a 35:1 return on investment ratio is something to be admired not cut.

Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC):

Policy Recommendations:

Funding--Mandatory funding at no less than \$9 million per year. This is the level of mandatory funding authorized for Fiscal Years 2013 and 2017.

Proposed Changes to Authorizing Language--The program should provide direct assistance through public and private-sector projects as well as technical assistance to remove, resolve, or mitigate sanitary and phytosanitary and technical barriers to trade. These barriers are defined under the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement.

Quick Response Capability--TASC was originally designed to be a nimble and effective way to help the private sector resolve technical barriers to trade. These barriers can emerge unexpectedly and require fast action to prevent market closures and trade disruptions in established markets. TASC was also designed to take advantage of opportunities that arise on short notice, such as meetings or travel by U.S. officials to foreign countries where industry representation might be of assistance. With the positive growth in funding and the expansion of projects designed to be carried out over multiple years, the process for approving projects has become more rigid, with a focus on allocating funds to increasingly larger projects. Congress should direct the Secretary to hold in reserve an adequate amount of TASC funds for quick response projects that might emerge on short notice over the course of the year as well as establish an approval process for such projects in order for decisions to be made in less than a week. Quick response language not included in Senate language.

Mandatory Funding--\$9 million per year (\$45 million over 5 years); funding of \$9 million per year included in Senate language.

Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) grants also have proven to be effective in removing, resolving or mitigating sanitary and phytosanitary technical barriers to trade. Our organization has witnessed firsthand what TASC grants have been able to accomplish. In our case, Mexico has now become the number two market for stone fruit, peaches, plums, nectarines and apricots, due specifically to this program. The Alliance recommends mandatory funding at \$9 million annually. This was the figure contained in the Senate markup.

International Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) Database:

Policy Recommendation--The SCFBA should coordinate with the Minor Crop Farmer Alliance to develop its policy recommendation. The Minor Crop Farmer Alliance is working with FAS to develop a permanent funding solution for the International MRL database. The level of yearly funding required is estimated at less than \$500,000. Congress should fund this program at \$500,000.

Mandatory Funding--\$500,000 per year (\$2.5 million over 5 years); Mandatory funding not included in Senate language.

Another key component of growing trade for U.S. growers revolves around the need to maintain a database for international Maximum Residue Limits (MRL's). We feel it is very important to recognize this fact by allocating mandatory funding of \$500,000 per year to maintain such a database. The Senate version currently does not contain this amount.

Title VII--Research

Enhancement of the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI):

Policy Recommendations:

Research Priorities--Congress should make changes that expand research priorities for specialty crops for crop characteristics, threat from pest and disease, handling and processing. In addition, Congress should incorporate stakeholder outreach when developing these priorities. Finally, Congress should provide USDA the flexibility to not require funding for each of the priority areas.

Review Panel--The SCFBA recommends Congress institute a policy that establishes a two-step process for reviewing research project under SCRI. The first review would be conducted by industry stakeholders. The stakeholder review panel would be focused on industry-specific proposals and would be asked to rank from "relevant to not for further consideration." The second panel would be similar to the current SCRI review process established under the 2008 Farm Bill and would be based on scientific merit around the proposals.

Mandatory Funding--\$100 million per year (\$500 million over 5 years); Senate language establishes baseline for SCRI of \$50 million (FY13 \$25 million, FY14-15 \$30 million, FY 16 \$65 million, FY17 \$50 million).

In regard to enhancement of the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI), we concur with the Alliance recommendation that establishes a two-step process for reviewing research project under SCRI. The first review would be conducted by industry stakeholders. The stakeholder review panel would be focused on industry-specific proposals and would rank proposals accordingly. The second panel would be similar to the current SCRI review process established under the 2008 Farm Bill and would be based on scientific merit around the proposals. We also agree with those that would make research available to qualifying universities and not just land-grant institutions. The Alliance recommends mandatory funding of \$100 million per year. The Senate language establishes a baseline of SCRI of \$50 million with FY 13 being \$25 million, FY14-15 \$30 million, FY16 \$65 million and FY17 \$50 million.

Title X--Horticulture and Organics:

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program:

Policy Recommendations:

No-Match Requirement--Congress should maintain the non-requirement of matching funds for grant recipients. However, states should be required to gather and maintain matching-fund data.

Grower-Level Projects--Congress should encourage states to further expand or prioritize grower-level projects. There are concerns in the industry that research critical to grower needs is not being adequately funded.

Strengthening Definitions--While states are required to undergo a thorough review process of grant requests, Congress should encourage states require applicants to provide appropriate justification for how a project "enhances the competitiveness" of specialty crops. By addressing this important issue, Congress will ensure funds are being targeted to the purpose of the block grant program while enhancing the integrity of this critical specialty crop policy tool.

Multi-State Projects--Due to the growing issues that impact specialty crops that are commodity specific or regionally critical, the SCFBA encourages USDA to consider policy options to help states facilitate the utilization of multi-state partnership projects. The SCFBA recommends Congress include language allowing USDA, at the initiation of two or more states or applicant(s) seeking to conduct a multi-state project, to coordinate grant approval through the multiple state processes. Senate language includes funding which ramps up from \$1 million (FY13) to \$5 million (FY17). Senate language has program targeting projects on Food Safety, Commodity Specific Issues, Pest & Disease and other programs deemed necessary by the Secretary.

Mandatory Funding--Support Senate recommendation of \$70 million per year (Current baseline is \$55 million per year).

Block grants have proven, especially for states like California, to

be an effective and efficient way to address specific concerns and challenges for specialty crops. We support the Senate recommendation of \$70 million per year as well as language allowing USDA, at the initiation of two or more states or applicant(s) seeking to conduct a multi-state project, to coordinate grant approval through a multiple state process.

Title X--Pest and Disease Programs:

Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention:

Policy Recommendation--The SCFBA recommends an increase in mandatory funding of \$25 million per year for each of the next 5 years (\$125 million).

Mandatory Funding--\$75 million per year (\$375 million over 5 years); Senate language sets funding at \$60 million (FY13-16), \$65 million (FY 17). Current funding level, per 2008 Farm Bill, is set at \$50 million per year.

Given the growing trend of an increasing introduction of invasive species, no area of this bill may be more important than to adequately fund efforts related to plant pest and disease management and disaster prevention. Current funding level, per 2008 Farm Bill, is set at \$50 million per year. The SCFBA recommends an increase in mandatory funding of \$25 million per year for each of the next 5 years. Currently Senate language sets funding at \$60 million (FY13-16), \$65 million (FY17).

In summary, the so called farm bill is many things. Most, as we know, has little to do with actual farming. I have attempted to highlight just a few prime areas that are of direct importance to our members and ultimately consumers. We also want to mention our support for air quality provisions in the bill which will be addressed by some of our colleagues and which is absent in the Senate version. In addition, we do not want to discount the importance of nutrition programs in this legislation. Whether it is the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program, the DOD Fresh program or the fruit and vegetable incentives for the SNAP program, we concur with the importance that the current Senate language has placed on these areas as well. Because in the final analysis this legislation can do much to combat the obesity epidemic this nation faces by changing individual eating habits to consume more healthy fruits, vegetables and nuts. And all of us win in the end when we have a healthier population.

Sincere thanks to you Congressman Cardoza, Congressman Costa for all of your efforts. We all know that your work is cut out for you in the House and we very much hope that the Valley Congressional delegation will show the bipartisanship leadership necessary in these difficult fiscal times to produce a bill that will appropriately invest in specialty crops for the benefit of all. Thank you again for this opportunity to speak to you today.

Comment of Dianne Bee

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 1:07 a.m.

City, State: Salina, KS

Occupation: Consumer

Comment: No Farm Bill For Anything But 100% Organic Farms Or Those Switching To Organic With Absolutely No Genetically Modified Organisms.

No more of my tax dollars should be going to unsustainable farm practices that destroy the environment, kill the bees, pollute the gene pool of my body and all of the population, and contribute to the growing disease problems including cancer, autoimmune diseases, obesity, and countless other diseases. GMOs that my tax dollars subsidize are grown by corporations that do not need nor deserve any support. I'm tired of lobbyists paying you off to vote for farm bills and GMOs, all while stomping on the Bill of Rights and undermining everything that this country used to stand for. It's time you take your oaths seriously or ship out, preferably to a communist third world country--after your citizenship rights are stripped--where your ideas will fit in.

Comment of Kara Beebee

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 2:47 p.m.

City, State: Columbus, OH

Occupation: Student

Comment: A subsidized insurance program congress proposes to replace what exists with will allow giant commodity farmers and insurance companies to walk away with billions in taxpayer dollars while putting the land, soil and environment at greater risk.

We need Real reform. Think of local and small farmers, the true members of our American community, when you are reforming this bill. Thank you.

Comment of Judy & Doug Beers

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 8:40 p.m.

City, State: Honeoye Falls, NY

Occupation: Educator

Comment: We need a farm bill that helps farmers, not farm factories and corporations like Monsanto. Put our Healthy food supply and the welfare of our independent and co-op farmers at the top of priorities where it belongs.

Comment of Alice Beetz

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 13, 2012, 12:01 p.m.

City, State: Fayetteville, AR

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Please work to create a farm bill that supports farming sustainably. It's time to reduce subsidies for commodity cropping. It's time to link financial support to practices and farmers who conserve our soil and protect fresh water resources for all of us.

Investing in today's and tomorrow's farmers makes economic sense in general. And it also helps ensure a continued supply of food for everyone. Food security!

Let's figure out how to produce good food without such dependence on petroleum.

Can you resist those whose lobbying means money in your coffers? Can you vote for the long-term good of the country's agricultural sustainability?

We are watching to see.

If yes, I will vote for you.

Alice Beetz,
Fayetteville, AR.

Comment of Linda Beg

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:39 a.m.

City, State: Denville, NJ

Occupation: Administrator

Comment: All power in the hands of the few always ends in disaster. The uncontrolled use of dangerous pesticides and GMO's in big AG supports Big Pharma and destroys our bees, people and the planet. Support for family farms is where money should go and distributed fairly to all, then if you have someone misusing the system, the rest balances it out, not so when all the power of food production is in too few hands.

Comment of Bill Behrend

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 17, 2012, 2:16 p.m.

City, State: Albany, GA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Other

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: I am a beekeeper. The best thing the new farm bill can do is limit pesticides and GMOs, and promote chemical free, sustainable agriculture that supports many small producers rather than fewer, larger producers, and locally produced ag products. But that won't happen because Congress has been bought by monied interests. Just do what is necessary to help bees survive--it will benefit us all.

Comment of Carla Behrens

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 10, 2012, 11:14 a.m.

City, State: Longmont, CO

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: I believe there should be more support for family farms, esp. organic farms. I believe that no American should go hungry; it is an atrocity that so many American children go hungry . . . we need to maintain programs such as SNAP.

Comment of Kate Behrens

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 12:17 p.m.

City, State: Madison, WI

Occupation: Healthcare

Comment: I would like to see much more support for Organic

agriculture.

Less or no subsidies for growing corn for HFCS or ethanol, or anything else.

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Thanks for all you do!

Kate Behrens.

Comment of Peggy Beirise

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 8:15 a.m.

City, State: Dayton, OH

Occupation: Insurance Agent

Comment: The health of the citizens of this nation depends on the food produced by the country's farmers. The current Farm Policy subsidies allows for cheap unhealthy food to flow abundantly in our food supply. This in . . . turn makes it easier for our population to consume, which is one of many factors contributing to the obesity epidemic. I'd like to see a farm bill that makes healthier food flow abundantly to our citizens. So that an easier, more affordable, and wiser food choice is made readily available to everyone in our communities. The small, local farms need your help.

Comment of Michelle Belanger

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:14 p.m.

City, State: Winston Salem, NC

Occupation: Self-Employed Carpenter/Musician

Comment: I support the following for the upcoming farm bill:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

I also believe that GM crops should be labeled, although I don't know if that is part of the scope of this bill. I have voted with my money for what kind of world I would like to live in for the last 30+ years. I vote for minimal use of chemical intervention, fair and humane treatment of farmers, farm workers and farm animals. Many agribusiness practices go against these values. The organic and local markets have seen some of the most consistent growth because large numbers of people agree with the common sense of these values and have been casting their votes as well. The farm bill should honor this. Specifically, I would like to mention, in the way of fair treatment for farmers, I ask that you be sure large distributors and processors who have monopolized markets for livestock are not allowed to take advantage of small farmers by, for example, requiring investments that take farmers several years to pay for, and then only giving contracts for one year. There are many other documented abuses and I hope you are aware of them and doing your diligence to make sure these issues are addressed. You can find out more from the organization RAFI USA. They have an excellent record of helping farmers who have been mistreated and helping legislators understand what needs to change. I also hope you will help this country move toward farming practices that use less fossil fuel, both in the form of fertilizers and other chemicals used on crops that are made with petroleum and natural gas, and less dependence on large machinery that uses a lot of fuel. I would like to see an end to subsidies that support such practices, as well as those

that go to wealthy people who don't even work on their farms. We should go back to paying farmers for storing commodity crops to be sold when the price goes up, instead of just paying them to dump it on the market for a below market price. The current practice drives down world market prices and causes small farmers in poor countries to go out of business. That, in turn, increases the number of immigrants. We must do better.

Comment of Daniel Belgum-Blad

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 9:34 a.m.

City, State: Atwater, MN

Occupation: Lutheran Minister

Comment: Members of Congress,

As a concerned citizen who works as a pastor with farm families and non-farm families, in rural Minnesota, I know how important farm policy is I have some concerns I would like you to address.

I support the full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286). This is a common sense approach to food supply issues.

I also support the full funding of conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies is tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

I also believe more people should have the opportunity to 'break into' farming. So I support the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

I believe we need to support sound farming practices, and organic farming should be encouraged. So I urge you to maintain the EQIP Organic Initiative. This is good for soil, water, food quality.

I understand, from my reading, that Republicans in the House Agricultural Committee have already voted to slash \$33 billion from the food stamp program while leaving farm subsidies unscathed. This is a travesty of justice! I strongly urge that this be blocked, and amended. The Food Stamp program saves tax payers billions ``down the road" in increased health care costs for underprivileged people.

In addition, it helps the most vulnerable: children.

I ask you to consider the above measures, and ask that you support them.

Sincerely,

Daniel Belgum-Blad

Comment of Judith Bell

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:51 a.m.

City, State: Oakland, CA

Occupation: President, PolicyLink

Comment: At this crucial time in the farm bill process, we urge you to include language authorizing the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI).

HFFI will help address the nation's obesity epidemic by increasing access to healthy food, and will also create jobs and spark much-needed economic development across the country. For decades, low-income communities, particularly communities of color, have suffered from lack of access to healthy, fresh food. HFFI will provide one-time loan and grant financing to attract grocery stores and other fresh food retail to underserved urban, suburban, and rural areas, and renovate and expand existing stores so they can provide the healthy foods that communities want and need.

HFFI will bring much needed jobs and investment to low-income communities by constructing and renovating grocery stores and markets in underserved areas. Many studies show that when healthy food is available in these communities, people make healthier choices about their diets, and studies also show a connection between healthy food access and lower rates of obesity and diet-related chronic disease. For instance, in April 2012, the American Journal of Preventive Medicine found that children living in neighborhoods with healthy food and safe play spaces are 56 percent less likely to be obese than children in neighborhoods without these features. HFFI holds great promise for helping combat childhood obesity by improving families' access to fresh, healthy food.

A similar program in Pennsylvania has resulted in 88 projects being built or renovated in underserved urban and rural communities across the state, more than 5,000 jobs created or retained, and 400,000 people who now have increased access to healthy food. Thirty million invested state dollars has resulted in projects totaling more than \$190 million.

Additionally, in 2011, using the Pennsylvania program as a model, the Obama Administration launched the inter-agency Healthy Food

Financing Initiative with the goal of increasing fresh food access in underserved rural, urban, and suburban communities across the country. Since its launch, Congress has allocated \$77 million for HFFI and projects improving access to healthy food at the Departments of Health and Human Services, Treasury, and at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Partners, including PolicyLink, The Reinvestment Fund, The Food Trust, The National Grocers Association, and numerous agriculture, health, civil rights and industry groups support HFFI.

We are thrilled at the tremendous momentum around the country right now to bring grocery stores to places that need them, but this national effort is still in a very nascent stage. In order to realize the incredible success that Pennsylvania achieved over 5 years, we will need a large and sustained effort over several years. The good news is that we know what to do and can do it successfully. The Pennsylvania's program's success rate has been better than the grocery industry overall. This one time infusion of grant and loan funds create ongoing, sustainable business that continue to provide a vital economic lifeline for their communities. This is critical for rural communities where grocery stores are both economic and social anchors.

Representatives Schwartz (D-PA), Burgess (R-TX), and Blumenauer (D-OR) have introduced legislation (H.R. 3525) to establish a national Healthy Food Financing program through the creation of a national fund manager housed within USDA. This structure would mirror closely the original public private partnership of the PA FFFI and allow the leverage of millions in private capital at the national level. Given the flexibility and range of projects that HFFI can support from supermarkets to farmers' markets and from Co-ops to CSAs, the farm bill is the appropriate vehicle to fully invest in a national effort to bring healthy food access to every city and small town that needs it.

The Senate Agriculture Committee's bipartisan Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 recently included language authorizing HFFI. In recognition of the multiple benefits that this initiative brings to underserved urban, suburban, and rural communities across the nation, we ask that the House Agriculture Committee also includes language around this tested and highly successful HFFI model as you move through the farm bill process.

Thank you.

Judith Bell, PolicyLink

John Weidman, The Food Trust

Patricia Smith, The Reinvestment Fund

Comment of Cynthia Bellini

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:32 p.m.

City, State: Eagle, CO

Occupation: Author--Health Books

Comment: The local farmers in their area need to be able to produce healthy food without introducing GMO's, pesticides, toxic sprays. This is destroying the soil and people's health. Enough is enough.

Comment of Stephanie Belseth

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:14 p.m.

City, State: Minneapolis, MN

Occupation: Pediatric Nurse Practitioner

Comment: I support local, organic farming which uses health-focused, environment-focused, sustainable practices, grass/natural-fed animals, a focus on vegetables and fruit over grains like GMO corn and soy that increase our waistlines and all of the related chronic illness that go along with that, rather than profit-focused, chemical, antibiotic and hormone laden money-first-based practices that pollute our water, land and air and make America sick. I see daily in practice, children with nutritional deficiencies, chemical and pesticide exposures that affect their behavior, schoolwork, relationships, and health. Some are overweight, some eat only processed foods, others have precocious puberty, others diabetes, high blood pressure, depression, anxiety, ADHD and autism.

Comment of Barrett Belveal

Date Submitted: Friday, March 16, 2012, 10:53 a.m.

City, State: Westport, WA

Occupation: Retired Pensioner

Comment: I support my local food bank, and I know they are struggling right now to meet the needs of my community. I ask that you pass a strong farm bill that protects and strengthens programs like TEFAP, SNAP, and CSFP. These programs are a lifeline to the millions of

Americans struggling with hunger, and I urge you make them a priority in the next farm bill.

In the mad rush to cut domestic spending Congress is operating on a strictly penny-wise, pound-foolish, basis for the sake of a debt that is not otherwise insurmountable. Stay out of Iran, close the off-shore bases and moor the Navy in U.S. Ports before taking one more dime from the domestic budget.

Comment of Anne Bembenek

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 11:50 p.m.

City, State: Almond, WI

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Livestock

Size: 50-150 acres

Comment: Dear Chairman Lucas,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture on the next farm bill. My district representative is being copied on this testimony. I wanted to let you know what my husband and I face, as small farm owners. We raise our few grass fed steers organically, but cannot afford the time and education to go thru the certification to be legally recognized as organic. As a 'new' farmer and considered under the class of disadvantaged because I'm a woman (new farmers mean less than 10 years) I was extremely interested in getting the FSA loans to lower our payments and allow us to make desperately needed repairs and upgrades. We live in fear of our one tractor dying and we cannot afford the \$30,000 to buy a newer basic model with the horsepower we need. The local FSA offices have closed, so I had to drive 1 hour and 15 minutes each way, several times to meet with an agent. After trying to fill out the paperwork and jumping thru the hoops, we were notified that there was no money to lend, even if I were to qualify. The program is underfunded. Farming is the only career that you have no control over. We live at the mercy of mother nature, adjustable rate loans, being unable to qualify for standard residential fixed rate loans because banks won't touch farm loans. We work off the farm jobs to pay the bills and get health insurance. There is no pension plans or 401(k)'s for small farmers. No disability insurance in one of the most dangerous jobs in the country. We work 100 hour weeks and don't draw a paycheck because we can barely keep the lights on. With the increase in the cost of fuel, we have been reduced to buying our fuel \$100 at a time. On paper, we are middle class. We are land rich and cash poor. Farm land has held it's value during this terrible down turn in the economy, but it doesn't matter if it's worth \$1, or \$1,000 an acre if we can't pay the mortgage. The programs that were put in place to protect the small farmer have turned into mini lottery winnings for large land owners and multinational companies. In 2000, we received just over \$900 in a corn subsidy payment. It's the only government money we've ever received or qualified for. We import poisonous food from other countries, while our own farmers find themselves so burdened by debt, and a broken system, that too many families have lost everything. When a farm family goes bankrupt, they don't just lose their house. They also lose their jobs and everything they have ever worked for. Unemployed and homeless. With other careers, there is a chance to find another job. A chance to buy another house down the road.

With the amount of money it takes to even buy a tiny place like ours, get decent used equipment, plant crops, and buy fertilizer, it's 100's of thousands of dollars just to get started. Who can afford that? Then, with that amount of debt sucking the accounts dry, there is nothing left to put away for bad weather years, or retirement, or even replacement equipment. Importing food is an unrecognized fuel to the recession crisis fire. A farmer needs land to plant crops in. That raises tax revenue, helps fuel housing recovery and creates jobs. We buy tractors. Those tractors come from parts that need to be manufactured. Parts from many different companies that keep people employed. We need seed to plant. That keeps the seed mill running. We need fertilizer. That keeps the fertilizer plant going. We are always needing repairs. Again employed people to make parts, mechanics to fix them. Truckers taking those parts from factory to shop. We buy those big trucks everyone hates because we need to pull equipment with them, and fill them with things too heavy and large to fit into cars. We hire people to help plow, plant, and harvest. We advertise trying to convince our neighbors that the food grown locally is healthy, and safe. That they aren't really saving 2 cents on that can of peas at Wal-Mart. Because that 2 cents is what creates all the jobs that grows the food, and that money stays here, in our country, in our neighborhoods. We support our schools and try to convince young people that farming isn't a job that ruins your body, and is like having a child that never grows up. It always has be watched and tended to.

There's no days off, no sick time. Animals don't care it's a holiday. They need fed and watered. Our tractors don't know that fuel is \$4 a gallon. They just know if the tank is dry, they are not going to turn over. Every penny that is spent importing food from other countries, buries this country further in debt. Being able to feed ourselves is a national security issue. We depend on other countries to feed us. To supply our fuel. To make the parts we need to keep things running. What happens when the day comes that one of those over populated countries with more than a billion people decide that they are going to call in their loans. That they can own us, instead of just loaning us money to keep us going. That they need our food more than we do. What happens when there is fuel, but no food? We need programs that help current farmers stay on their farms. Programs that are actually funded, and based on the real world needs of today's farmers. We need to educate our citizens about what our country does actually produce, and what is in season. We can live without strawberries in December. We need to become more realistic about the capital needed to buy a new place, or keep an old place running. We need to realize that farming isn't like other jobs, and that the ebb of flow of weather patterns balance out. That the banks can't expect every year to be better than the last.

We need banks to offer fixed rate loans to farmers at competitive rates. When 30 year fixed rate loans went below 4%, our adjustable rate mortgage was at 8.25%. We had good credit and plenty of equity but there is little competition because there are so few farm lending institutions. We need to cut down on the amount of paperwork required to qualify for the programs that already exist. A credit card company will give an unsecured credit line to an 18 year old, but hesitates to give a loan to a farmer with good credit because farming isn't considered a reliable profession. If we want our young people to be farmers, we must make it possible for them to have a hope of owning their own land. We need to have an apprenticeship program. Where kids can spend their summers learning how farming actually works. Once it's in your blood, once you see the field of dirt from the spring, suddenly green up, grow and mature into a crop that needs harvested, the sense of accomplishment, and the wonder of mother nature is hard to let go of. We live in a mobile society. Owning a farm puts roots down to the center of the Earth. We are part of the land, and the land is part of us. The only way we go mobile is in illness and bankruptcy. We need help. There will never be future farmers, if today's small farmer can't hold on. We will risk our lives to save a frozen calf, bring it into our basement to warm it up, because that one calf, is a years work lost if it dies. There's no replacing the money lost. It's dead and worthless. And the bank looks at our books and decides what we do is too risky to grant loans to. We can drive less to save fuel, but we still need to eat everyday. We can have Doctors finding cures to terrible diseases, but those Doctors can't do anything without fuel for their bodies. We can give up vacations to save money, but we still have to eat. No matter what you do, or who you are. Rich or poor. Successful or homeless, we must eat. The head of the most powerful nation on Earth can command horrible destruction upon other countries, but in 3 days, with no food, he won't be able to keep his thoughts straight. We need food, like we need air to breath, and yet farming is a dying profession.

It's time to make changes that make farming as important as the Doctor who treats our bodies. It's more important than even those that will vote on whether changes are made, and those changes are practical and based on real world knowledge and not what big companies tell you farming is. Farming is not 3,000 dairy cows confined to tiny stalls with 3 shifts of low paid workers hooking up machines. That kind of farming is how tainted food gets into the system. Those low paid workers have no vested interest in keeping those cows healthy and happy. You let those workers own a piece of those cows, and you'll see them bend over backwards to make sure their animal has the right feed, is comfortable, and is healthy. You'll see them not want to keep that cow in that huge barn, because that's not what's best for the cow. We need to offer people the chance to own and control their most basic need. Food. Please talk to small farmers. Take this chance to actually pass a bill that is smart and is composed from common sense. Get out of the office, go to the local technical college in an agricultural community, and talk to the students. Ask what drives them to farming, and away from farming. Come to my house and see the amount of money it takes to keep our tiny 80 acres going. Talk to our local University extension office and ask them the hurdles that local farmers face. Time magazine ran an article about the way to get rich in this poor economy is to farm. The only people getting rich right now, are people that actually were rich, and now are richer because of all the bankruptcy and picking up land at bank sales. Even here, in central Wisconsin. Our tiny run down farm is worth \$320,000 with just land value. That's without a building on it. If a person wanted to buy it, they'd need great credit and 20% down. That's \$64,000 before a single foot of

cement is poured for a house, or a piece of equipment is bought. No septic system installed for at least \$6,000. A well for running water another \$10,000 or more. They need a place to live.

A small new house is pretty inexpensive here compared to other parts of the country. You can get by for \$100,000. Our house was build from 1902-1906. From a plans bought thru the Sears catalog. It's not old and quaint, it's old and we've spent almost as much as if we'd bought a new house to remodel and update. There's \$60,000 for a shed to keep equipment in, once they can buy it. For descent used equipment a farmer starting from scratch has already spent \$320,000 on land, \$16,000 so they can have water to wash and a place to flush a toilet when the house goes up. \$100,000 for a small house. \$60,000 for a shed. \$30,000+ (Big tractors go for 100's of thousands of dollars, plus combines and 24 row seeders). \$12,000 for a disc to break up the soil. We grown a few steer and hay so we'll I'll use our equipment. \$6,000 for a seed drill and roller. \$7,500 for a haybine (to cut the hay), \$12,000 for a descent round baler, or about \$8000 for a 30 year old 40# kicker square baler (like we use), \$10,000 for 4 bale racks (we need at least 2 more and these are what the bale of hay shoot into after they come out the back of the baler), \$30,000+ for a barn to put the hay in, \$2,000 for an elevator to get hay to the upper parts of the barn. We rent fertilizer spreaders and are in the market for a manure spreader for cheap. The new farmers tab is at over \$600,000 and they haven't spent a dime for fuel, seed, or fertilizer. They haven't purchased a vehicle, or anything for the house. No electricity, heating or cooling the house. No insurance, property taxes, liability insurance (another things with little competition because most carriers won't touch it). Workers compensation if they need to hire help. No employment taxes. Self employment taxes. Disability insurance for when they get hurt, and I'm pretty sure the injury rate is 100% over a lifetime. No retirement plan. No medical payments, dentists, clothing, and every other things needed in everyday life. A new farmer, in our area, if they are lucky will only need to get loans for roughly \$750,000. That's if they don't plan on having a dairy operation which is much more expensive to start and maintain. All that, and no vacations, days off, sleeping late, paid holidays, health insurance, retirement plans, working 60-100 weeks and still not making enough to pay the mortgage, all the while having people, after they find out you own a farm, yell at you because the cost of food so high. Which is a joke because we get \$.90 a pound for beef if we're really lucky. Buy it at the store and a steak is over \$12. Our grocery bill, without meat because we raise our own, is about \$400 per month. Farmers who can't afford to eat. That's how broken the system is, and it will only get worse if more worthless farm bills are passed. Don't talk to the people who supply Wal-Mart, talk to our neighbor Harlan, or Roy. Harlan can't retire even though his son has worked the farm with him his whole life, and Roy lost his farm to the bank. Again, our food supply is a national security issue. Please give it the time, research and effort that goes into keeping our borders safe, and supplying our solders, because time is running out.

If you want to keep eating safe food, domestically grown, there needs to be a shift in perception of farming and how important it is to our entire nation. Tomorrow, don't eat. Voluntarily fast for a day and see how important food becomes by the end of the day. You don't see your Doctor everyday, but you do hope to see food on your plate everyday. Shouldn't the people supplying that all important commodity be held in the same respect as healers, or lawyers, or lawmakers? We need help, we need it now, and this isn't being dramatic. The numbers don't lie. Nobody wants to work 365 days a year to help others, and have our government ignore or minimize how important the job we do is. We need new people to replace those that bankrupt or can't work anymore. We don't need handouts, we need sound financial programs that let us do our job, and make that job appealing to the next generation. The form letter follows my personal letter. Thank you for your time, and I truly pray that you will pass a farm bill that helps American's feed America. Sincerely, Anne Bembenek Almond, Wisconsin

I am a young farmer and I'd like to share my support for programs that help the next generation of growers build strong farm businesses. As it's estimated that 125,000 farmers will retire in the next 5 years, it's absolutely critical that farm bill programs help citizens get started in this challenging field. I ask that the Committee endorse all of the provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236), including:

Mandatory funding for Individual Development Accounts at \$5 million per year. This program helps new farmers raise capital to start farm businesses and is tested and proven by organizations like Practical Farmers of Iowa and the California Farmlink.

Mandatory funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher

Development Program at \$25 million a year. This program funds essential education for new farmers around the country.

Authorize a new microloan program, to enable young and beginning farmers to better access FSA loan programs.

Revise FSA rules to make loan programs more accessible to more young and beginning farmers.

Reaffirm the existing cost share differential for BFRs within EQIP. Also, reaffirm the advance payment option allowing beginning and socially disadvantaged producers to receive an advance payment for the project's costs for purchasing materials or contracting services, but increase the limit on the advance payment from 30 percent to 50 percent of costs.

Amend the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP) to make farm viability part of the purpose of the program and to give discretionary authority to the eligible entities that implement the program to give priority to easements with an option to purchase at the agricultural use value, deals that transfer the land to beginning and farmers and ranchers, applicants with farm succession plans, and other similar mechanisms to maintain the affordability of protected land.

These and other provisions within the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act will help new growers succeed and I urge you to include them in the next farm bill.

Sincerely,

Anne Bembenek.

Comment of Roni Ben-David

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:23 p.m.

City, State: San Francisco, CA

Occupation: Educator

Comment: Please do your part to make reforms to the farm bill including:

More funding towards a healthy school lunch program.

Less subsidies for commodity crops and big agribusinesses

More subsidies for small organic family farms

Keep the SNAP program providing low-income individuals with support in shopping at farmer's markets

Amend our international Food Aid program so that we can source food aid from the recipient country (not just food produced in the USA).

Comment of Emily Bender

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:38 a.m.

City, State: Fairfax, CA

Occupation: Nutritionist

Comment: How we produce our food and what we support as a nation impacts the health of the Earth as well as public health. Please support a farm bill that takes away subsidies from agribusiness who produce commodity products for processed foods, and instead support farmers producing organic fruits, vegetables, dairy and meats in a sustainable way.

Comment of Nancy Bender

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 10:05 a.m.

City, State: Chicago, IL

Occupation: Gallery Manager

Comment: Support the small farmer and stop giving away the subsidies to the corporate farmer. The small farmer takes better care of their animals and the land.

Comment of Oebm Bendrah

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 12:46 p.m.

City, State: Hawthorne, FL

Occupation: Retired

Comment: I am just a home gardener. My thoughts are that America's

people, land, and food supply are greatly benefitted by smaller farms and reformed methods of crop growing. Please support farm policies that favor these. When it comes to healthier people, land and food that is way we need to go.

Comment of Crista Benedict

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:30 p.m.

City, State: Chico, CA

Occupation: Paralegal and Student

Comment: As Representatives of the citizens of this country, it is imperative that you stand up for their rights to have a healthy diet. You should no cater to industrial farming. Studies have shown time and time again that medium sized, organic farms produce more food, are healthier for the environment (i.e., no pesticide run-off, no development of superbugs, no risk of contamination to other foods) and actually have nutrients.

This is an extremely critical issue. The rural communities are dying and part of that is because of the provisions of the farm bill-- Congress has cut funding to rural development and small farms while catering to big business and industrial farming. It has to stop. It has to stop for our health and for the future of food.

It will be your fault when we have a food collapse because of the funding that is cut to vital programs. This is in your hands. Do the right thing.

I support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Keep in mind that large industrial farms and the companies that own them (Montsano, Dupont, etc.) do Not Need The Subsidies. Subsidies should be reserved for those farmers that actually need them. Farmers that struggle to make ends meet. Farmers that don't make a profit. Farmers that want to grow more than one crop.

You are ruining our ecosystems with the monoculture you fund through the farm bill. Stop.

Comment of Al Benner

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:57 a.m.

City, State: Honesdale, PA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Other

Size: 50-150 acres

Comment: We are a small bio-diverse organic farm in your district, and we believe our country needs more incentives for small scale farms that are farming in ways to protect the environment and our health to have more protection and incentives to compete with large scale farms. GMO crops are a huge concern as is our reliance on synthetic chemicals/ fertilizers on monoculture type agricultural systems with just a handful of species makes us all vulnerable. We also Must get Federal subsidies out of Washington for large corporations and reduce regulations for small scale farmers so we can compete on a level playing field.

Thanks,

Al Benner.

P.S.: I had to check ``other" because we are raising a little bit of everything--a good way to go because it balances the ecosystem and requires little to no external inputs--learn more at: www.oldschoolfarmers.blogspot.com.

Comment of Allisa Bennett

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:12 p.m.

City, State: Denver, CO

Occupation: Permaculture Design Consultant

Comment: Thank you for putting the well-being of your constituents

before the profits of corporate agribusinesses. Our country's ability to thrive in these changing times and the health of our children and grandchildren may depend on your decisions in this realm. Your best efforts are needed in support of growers who build rather than erode soil quality, who harvest rather than waste water, who grow food primarily for themselves and their own region, for those who promote biodiversity rather than monocropping and for those who are starting or maintaining small and medium-sized organic and biodynamic farms. Thank you for using all the resources at your disposal to affirm that this is our Father's world and that Nature's Divine Design does not need fixing. Thank you for relying on the tried and true economies of natural systems, culture, and agriculture rather than the false economies of gene-tech and toxic chemical intervention in food production. Do your research and listen to your soul rather than to the loudest lobbyists. Again, thank you for your public service.

Comment of Matthew Bennett

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:04 p.m.

City, State: Westville, NJ

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Forestry, Fruits, Specialty Crops, Other

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: We need to outgrow outmoded, degenerative methods of feeding ourselves, and because we are blessed to live in a Democracy, we can choose to do so.

Please support a farm bill that supports small, innovative, organic, ecological, and permaculture farms. Cultivating higher quality foods for all that also improves soil fertility is essential to sustaining the progress of our Nation.

Comment of Stacey Bennett

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:46 a.m.

City, State: Blandon, PA

Occupation: Instructional Technologist

Comment: Please let's have some real reform in the farm bill to create a better future for all of us! Organics should be supported and embraced because all other ways of producing food are leading to the demise of our population. Organic Can feed the world and it needs to be given a chance. This starts in the farm bill!

Comment of Virginia Bennett

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:12 p.m.

City, State: Honolulu, HI

Occupation: University Professor

Comment: It is time this country went back to putting its ordinary citizens in first place. Now Congress seems totally in control of the Big Agribusiness companies, which supply us with less the healthful foods--more likely with health-endangering food products. It's now up to legislators to show us that they work for us, not ``Big Ag." and pass an organic farm bill!

Comment of Peyton Benoit

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:20 p.m.

City, State: Prescott, AZ

Occupation: Student

Comment: More money needs to be put into organic agriculture. Pesticides are bad for our health and the environment. We should be putting money into health and the environment.

Comment of Erle Benson

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:46 p.m.

City, State: Boulder, CO

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: Two issues I believe are important to consider carefully. The first, the area of environmental support for Organic farming. The second directly relates to the first . . . how to control the use of GMO seeds and farming. No

Comment of Gaynell Benson

Date Submitted: Thursday, March 22, 2012, 3:29 p.m.

City, State: Waco, TX

Occupation: Administration

Comment: As a former recipient of the SNAP (Food Stamp Program), I can truly attest to the fact that the program was a Blessing to me and

my three children (now adults). I worked hard to provide for my family and to make ends meet; no matter how long the hours, the pay was still not enough, but we made it. This program gave us a hand-up so that we would not go hungry. Now the USDA has been involved in providing free breakfast to all school age children who may or may not have eaten the night before. This free breakfast also assists in the productivity and the ability to function in school. So, therefore H. RES. 564 is a wonderful bill to support; not only will it continue to ensure that good nutrition and health awareness is promoted, but it will also ensure that our children will be able to focus/enhance their learning in the classroom to become productive citizens. As a mother/grandmother I would like to urge you to support this bill so that SNAP and other nutritional programs will continue to be a Blessing to the less fortunate.

Sincerely submitted,

G. Benson.

Comment of Josh Benson-Merron

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:57 p.m.

City, State: Santa Cruz, CA

Comment: We need to protect the future of our food system in America. Right now our food system is broken and if we continue the way we are going we could face another dust bowl--industrial agriculture is overexploiting the land and is not sustainable. People should know where their food came from and how it was grown because it is vital not only for their health but for the health of the land. We need to stop experimenting with nature and return to a farming system that we know is healthy and sustainable.

Comment of Charles Bent

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:43 p.m.

City, State: Wilton, NH

Occupation: Interior Decorator

Comment: We need to get pesticides out of our food. Please give us the chance to live healthy lives. Agribusiness is motivated by greed, not healthy nutrition.

Comments of Mary Bentley

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 09, 2012, 11:22 p.m.

City, State: Mason City, IA

Occupation: Disabled

Comment: Please keep in mind that there are a lot of people suffering with prices in the markets--the cost of food to eat healthy; especially those with limited incomes & those with health issues. Thank you.

Date Submitted: Saturday, April 28, 2012, 12:09 a.m.

Comment: There are so many people that are struggling so much just to keep food on the table, some are elderly, some with children, & the disabled. It would be very sad to think that these food programs could be cut when the need is so great, especially with people having no jobs or able only to find part-time work. Thank you for your considerations.

Comment of Dimitar Berbatov

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 02, 2012, 4:52 p.m.

City, State: Providence, RI

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Other

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: As a concerned taxpayer and resident of Rhode Island, I am writing this letter to voice concerns about the provisions being proposed in the 2012 Farm Bill. Understanding that significant budget cuts and reforms need to be made in this year's bill, I would like to underscore my concern for revisions to conservation compliance programs. Because federally subsidized crop insurance is currently not subject to conservation compliance, I would like to express support for measures ensuring long-term sustainability in order to ensure the continued productivity of our nation's cropland.

Comment of Linda Berd

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 8:18 p.m.

City, State: Magdalena, NM

Occupation: Thoroughbred Horse Industry

Comment: I am continually, terribly disturbed at the direction of our food production ``industry''--toward factory farming (inhumane &

ecologically destructive) and subsidizing already profitable large agribusinesses--to the detriment and exclusion of the small farmer & the healthiest food one could find . . . local; organically grown; family farmed. And now there are those hideously selfish individuals in Congress who are perfectly willing to kowtow to the multi \$\$\$\$ from agribusiness and throw the rest of those trying to bring good food to the table, and indeed even cut food stamps and send the poor From the table--those who will not heed the majority who want Healthy Food and Do Not Want To Subsidize Big Business. You'd better listen . . . For several years I have not bought factory farmed meat/poultry and never will until those animals we slaughter are treated Humanely. And I get my produce from locals--including eggs. If you only care about being re-elected that's your problem. My problem is getting food that won't kill me. And for some, getting any food at all , thanks to Food Stamps. Shame . . .

Comment of Patricia Berezcki

Date Submitted: Friday, May 04, 2012, 1:31 a.m.

City, State: Vancouver, WA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: I am very disappointed that the Agribusinesses are so against the independent family farmers by pushing Monsanto contaminated products. Then going after farmers by taking them to court because the genetically engineered seeds blew over onto their property. Family farmers are the backbone of our country and must be treated more fairly. I don't want to eat genetically engineered food and I don't want my family, or anybody else's, to have to either. We have choices and we should be allowed to choose which foods we will eat. That is why my family eats as much local and organic foods as we can. And, we are much healthier for it. Thank you.

Comment of Alex Beresniewicz

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:01 p.m.

City, State: Seattle, WA

Occupation: Publisher

Comment: Jim,

It's time to end subsidy's to large farms that don't need it and CAFO's that don't deserve it. Aim the subsidy's at nutrition programs, small producers, and organic farming. Please!

Comment of Abigail Berg

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:14 p.m.

City, State: Sequim, WA

Occupation: Auditor

Comment: We depend on the government to TRY and be fair and giving large farm subsidies and Not supporting organic agriculture OR food stamps (which need some reform), is atrocious.

Comment of Pamela Berg

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 17, 2012, 1:15 p.m.

City, State: Philadelphia, PA

Occupation: Public Health Researcher

Comment: We need a farm bill that does more than provide handouts to large wealth agribusiness to grow corn and soy for animal feed on one hand and provide free food to the poorest people on the other. We need a common sense farm bill that supports a healthy food system for everyone--a farm bill that matches what the USDA and all nutrition experts tell us we should eat. The MyPlate does not have GMO corn or soybeans on it, so why should our tax dollars support overproduction of these commodities!?

Comment of Paula Berg

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 10, 2012, 5:54 p.m.

City, State: Oak Park, IL

Occupation: Manager/Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry

Comment: I am humbled and saddened at the amount of people in our community who are truly food insecure and need assistance.

These are our neighbors, our friends and fellow human beings, having to worry how to feed themselves and their families.

Please Do Not allow cuts to SNAP. Our neighbors deserve our support and respect.

Comment of Peter Berg

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 4:48 a.m.

City, State: Kamuela, HI

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Greenhouse/nursery

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: It's past time to understand and act upon the fact that factory agricultural & current chemical fertilizer & pesticide practices are major contributors to the health problems experienced by a growing number of Americans. These problems will be compounded as time goes on--and if you don't understand this, you haven't done your homework. Don't let the big agriculture producers be the only source of information on this critically important issue.

Thank you,

Peter Berg.

Comment of By Berger

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 12:05 p.m.

City, State: Sierra Madre, CA

Occupation: Kindergarten Teacher

Comment: Mr. Drier

I am a member of Slow Foods. I am in favor of a farm bill that encourages small acreage, organically oriented farmers and against GMO and pesticide contaminated food.

Comment of Christine Berger

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:01 p.m.

City, State: Oakland, CA

Occupation: Accounts Payable Coordinator

Comment: I support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

I am really hoping to see some changes in the disaster that is our current management of agriculture. With corporate agribusiness giving in to poisoning the population and non-identification of GMO crops (as opposed to what most other countries of the free world do) to the trampling of small farmers who do not use pesticide or who are organic it is at the point where I am afraid to eat anything produced here other than what I can get at the farmer's market or grow in my own back yard. Please realize that we are in trouble with our food supply and that we the people need you to step up and make the necessary changes. Please.

Comment of Janna Berger

Date Submitted: Monday, May 14, 2012, 10:02 p.m.

City, State: Falls Village, CT

Comment: Please support programs that use government dollars to increase the viability of an enduring and secure food system such as SARE grants (of which our farm is a recipient to research no-till organic vegetable systems), Beginning Farmer Rancher grants, Value Added Producer Grants, the Conservation Stewardship Program, and the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative.

Comment of Janice Bergeron

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:02 p.m.

City, State: North Branford, CT

Occupation: Unemployed

Comment: I am lucky to live in a farm town, family farms that is. I support them and buy organic whenever I can. It tastes better and lasts longer on the shelf . . . organic bananas last nearly 10 days! And Monsanto suing small farmers because of accidental cross pollination? Why don't organic farmers sue Them for polluting Their crops?

Comment of Audra Bergman

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:02 a.m.

City, State: Great Falls, MT

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Livestock, Poultry/poultry products, Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Going into our third growing season as beginning farmers(My husband and I), I feel that it is imperative to continue to support and fund programs for beginning farmers and ranchers. Specific challenges one faces in starting up are: access to land and access to capital/equipment. The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Loan programs through FSA are especially important; our country needs to invest in small/family agricultural producers throughout the nation, not big agribusiness and centralized production. Thank you.

Comment of Deborah Bergman

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 5:32 p.m.

City, State: Sarasota, FL

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Local farms are good for the economy, the pocketbook of the consumer and the perpetuation of family farms. Please support these farms.

Comment of Henry Berkowitz

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 9:17 p.m.

City, State: Sabinsville, PA

Occupation: Counselor

Comment: If you are interested in doing the right thing, you will pass a farm bill that encourages conservation, and organic farming, and providing help for the small farmer. We don't need you to give more to the mega corporations, they already get too much from this government. I'm hoping you will vote to help the people who actually need the help.

Comment of Janice Berlepsch

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 9:12 p.m.

City, State: St. Augustine, FL

Occupation: Retired

Comment: We want healthy safe food . . . vote for an organic food bill and stop subsidizing millionaire corporate farms.

Comment of Marcia Berman

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 8:39 a.m.

City, State: Berkeley, CA

Occupation: Retired Psychotherapist

Comment: Pay attention to the small family farms trying to give us fresh, healthy produce and be sure to heavily supervise and regulate big Ag from beginning to end.

End genetically modified food production completely. Not healthy. Grown with pesticide inside. Ugh!

Do the right thing. Fulfill your responsibility to keep America's food supply safe and ever-present. No big Ag. Too hard to regulate and supervise. Not good. Thank you.

Comment of Susan Berman

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:23 p.m.

City, State: Longmont, CO

Occupation: Educator

Comment: Please support all legislation that protects our food sources as organic as possible. And protects farmers who need support to supply organic products.

Comment of Hannah K. Bernhardt

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 10:54 p.m.

City, State: Brooklyn, NY

Occupation: Organizer

Comment: Dear Chairman Lucas,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture on the next farm bill. My district representative is being copied on this testimony. I am an aspiring farmer, beginning farmer advocate, and volunteer for The Greenhorns and the National Young Farmers' Coalition, and I'd like to share my support for programs that help the next generation of growers build strong farm

businesses. I grew up on a family farm in southern Minnesota, and even with those roots, I never considered a career in farming until recently because of the many obstacles I knew I would face. As it's estimated that 125,000 farmers like my father and my friends' fathers will retire in the next 5 years, it's absolutely critical that farm bill programs help young people get started in this challenging field. I ask that the Committee endorse all of the provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236), including:

Mandatory funding for Individual Development Accounts at \$5 million per year. This program helps new farmers raise capital to start farm businesses and is tested and proven by organizations like Practical Farmers of Iowa and the California Farmlink.

Mandatory funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program at \$25 million a year. I have worked on a BFRDP grant with the Greenhorns nonprofit and the Cornell Small Farms Program and saw first hand how these programs are essential to new farmer education.

Authorize a new microloan program, to enable young and beginning farmers to better access FSA loan programs.

Revise FSA rules to make loan programs more accessible to more young and beginning farmers.

Reaffirm the existing cost share differential for BFRs within EQIP. Also, reaffirm the advance payment option allowing beginning and socially disadvantaged producers to receive an advance payment for the project's costs for purchasing materials or contracting services, but increase the limit on the advance payment from 30 percent to 50 percent of costs.

Amend the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP) to make farm viability and affordability of protected land part of the purpose of the program. Give discretionary authority to the eligible entities that implement the program to prioritize easements with an option to purchase at the agricultural-use value and deals that transfer the land to beginning farmers and ranchers or applicants with farm succession plans.

These and other provisions within the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act will help new growers succeed and I urge you to include them in the next farm bill.

Sincerely,

Hannah K. Bernhardt,
Marketing Director,
[Redacted],
Brooklyn, NY.

Comment of Janet Bernson

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:42 p.m.

City, State: Sherman Oaks, CA

Occupation: Expressive Arts Therapist

Comment: Organic food is our best answer to good health for all citizens . . . all of which translates into a healthy community/country. Both short and long term effects of chemically maintained and genetically enhanced foods may be good for corporate interests but not for the humans who work for said industry or the people who buy their products and ultimately not for communities. Anything less than organic and biodynamic is economically foolish and a human travesty.

Comment of Simon Bernstein

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 02, 2012, 9:51 p.m.

City, State: Galena, IL

Occupation: Illinois Licensed Doctor of Naprapathic Medicine

Comment: Small family farms using sustainable farming methods are our best hope for the future. Not industrial farming methods controlled by the corporate lobbies! Support Family Farms Not Factory farms!

Comment of Sharon Berrt

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 10, 2012, 12:01 p.m.

City, State: Tucson, AZ

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: I do not agree with cutting money from these programs. Please reconsider and maybe not send money to foreign countries for food aid. We need to feed our own before they get any help.

Comment of Amanda Berry

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 10:35 p.m.

City, State: Fort Myers, FL

Occupation: Hospitality Professional

Comment: I would like to see the farm bill address healthy, sustainable farming practices with a greater focus on agro-diversity and natural methods driven by small, private farms and co-ops. Thank you.

Comment of Ana Berry

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:30 p.m.

City, State: Portland, OR

Occupation: Student

Comment: Stop subsidizing foods based on benefits to mega companies like Monsanto. Support the people you were elected for:

- (1) label our food properly--when it's GMO, when it's truly organic, when it has dangerous carcinogens in it
- (2) subsidize small farms to distribute good local food
- (3) we all know it costs the government more to take care of our obesity epidemic and heart problems than it would cost to subsidize good food.

Comment of Ben Berry

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:01 p.m.

City, State: Cedar, NC

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: I support research and innovation funding. We need to focus our energies on diversifying our farms, increasing transparency, and encouraging competition. Less subsidies to commodity crops! Remember that organic is the largest growing sector in agriculture. Support the transition and interest in local and organic.

Comment of Catherine Berry

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 02, 2012, 1:21 a.m.

City, State: High Point, NC

Occupation: Disabled/Retired

Comment: Please consider safe and abundant water provisions. Investment into organic produce. Assistance to farmers who produce chemically free, humanly raised and slaughtered farm animals.

Comment of Michael Berry

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:26 p.m.

City, State: Omaha, NE

Occupation: CPA

Comment: It is time to stop subsidizing processed food in our country. The cost of obesity and the associated health problems is exploding. It is time to roll back the farm policies enacted under the leadership of Earl Butz and enact smart and ultimately healthy farm policies. As with the dramatic reforms of Earl Butz, farmers will adapt to the changes and again begin to supply our country with healthy food.

Comment of J. Ellen Berryhill

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:12 p.m.

City, State: Menlo Park, CA

Occupation: Director of Quality

Comment: Dear Anna,

I urge you to support the provisions of the farm bill that do the following:

1. Support small farmers (< 1,000 acres), organic farmers and new farmers trying to get into the industry.
2. Support for local farmers markets

3. End subsidies (direct payments and countercyclical commodity programs), and replace them with loophole-free agriculture risk coverage. Also, implement a cap on crop insurance premium subsidies.
4. Support nutrition programs for the elderly, the poor and for disadvantaged children.
5. Focus conservation funding on lasting environmental benefits.
6. Protect the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) from disproportionate cuts. Improve CSP by ranking applications solely on their conservation benefits.

Thank you very much for your support.

J. Ellen Berryhill.

Comment of Bill Best

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:34 p.m.

City, State: Berea, KY

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Vegetables

Size: 50-150 acres

Comment: I have farmed for over 60 years and still participate actively in two farmers' markets. I also operate an heirloom seed business and produce and sell seeds of heirloom beans, tomatoes, cucumbers, and winter squash. If we depend on the agricultural giants for our food, we will be taking a path to our own destruction.

Comment of Cheryl Best

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 7:17 p.m.

City, State: Staunton, IL

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: I see firsthand the impact the chemicals have produced in my students . . . diabetes, behavior disorders, and obesity to name a few. We have to protect future generations!

Comment of Vicki Best

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:21 p.m.

City, State: Tallahassee, FL

Occupation: Retired

Comment: I think that the farm subsidies for large agribusiness should be discontinued, genetically modified foods should be labeled or not used at all, and the ethanol program should be discontinued and corn goes back on the food market not the fuel market. Protect us not big business! We voted you in, they just pay the bills.

Comment of Linda Bethel

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:18 p.m.

City, State: Punta Gorda, FL

Occupation: Registered Dietitian, Licensed Nutritionist

Comment: Please advocate that the House Agriculture Committee ensures that the health of Americans is protected with safe growing practices for our food supply. That means avoiding harmful chemicals and genetically modified foods, as well as protecting the viability of the soil for future production. Industrial farming relies too heavily on harmful chemicals.

Comment of Skye Lindanne Bethel

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:20 p.m.

City, State: Glenn Allen, VA

Occupation: Retired Counselor

Comment: It is time for reform. Organic food produces excellent health for the consumers and for the Earth. We can make changes in our healthcare by affording more people healthy organic food, we can clean up the environment and we can improve the quality of life for people who want to produce food for locally.

Comment of Ramona Beville

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:27 a.m.

City, State: Benicia, CA

Occupation: Adult Education Teacher

Comment: Quit subsidizing foods that are going to be heavily

processed. Subsidies are benefiting the manufacturer's of cheap food and unhealthy food and this is contributing to the rate of chronic illness and obesity in this country. This is not a passive or indirect contribution but literally the cause of many illnesses is the consumption of highly refined and processed foods instead of live, healthy foods that are less shelf stable. The fact that lower income people are at higher risk for chronic diseases has to do with the fact that healthier food is more expensive and cheap foods are artificially cheap. Quit putting money in the pockets of the manufacturers and providing cheap ingredients to them, quit subsidizing feed for animals and creating an artificial cost for these animal foods. Make farming on a small scale attractive to farmers. Make working on the farm an attractive way to make a living. Stop subsidizing the mono crops that have ruined our top soil, require chemicals to make them fertile and are ruining our streams and rivers and creating dead zones in the ocean. Stop factory farming practices as they are not paying the full price to operate their factories, they are leaving behind environmental residue that no one is addressing. Work with farmers to get fresh produce to people instead of providing factories with cheap resources to sell back to us to make us sick.

Comment of Sally Bianco

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:33 p.m.

City, State: Chico, CA

Occupation: Botanist

Comment: Herger, as a gift to your constituents before leaving us, please consider the consumers rather than the profits of the agriculture industry and pass reform laws. As a plant scientist and someone who lives surrounded by farmland, I know that heavy chemical use, lack of crop species/varieties diversity, and many other practices of the ag industry are harmful to everyone. Please gift us with your true support for a farm reform bill that supports and encourages organic farming, crop diversity, reduction of erosive and polluting cultivation measures, and scientifically meaningful nutrition programs.

Comment of Ronnie Bias

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:49 p.m.

City, State: Las Vegas, NV

Occupation: Retired

Comment: For GODS sake, please stop poisoning the American people and do what's righteously right, we have to give farmers everything they need to feed us healthy foods not GMO poison.

Comment of Andy Bicking

Date Submitted: Thursday, April 05, 2012, 11:41 a.m.

City, State: Poughkeepsie, NY

Occupation: Director of Public Policy, Scenic Hudson; on behalf of Land Trust Statement

Comment: Land Trust Statement by Andy Bicking, Director of Public Policy, Scenic Hudson

Farm Bill Field Hearing

March 9, 2012

Saranac Lake, New York

Thank you for arranging today's field hearing on the farm bill and for this opportunity to submit comment.

Scenic Hudson is a 49 year old nonprofit environmental organization and land trust that works to protect and restore the Hudson River and its majestic landscape as an irreplaceable national treasure and a vital resource for residents and visitors. With more than 25,000 ardent supporters, we are the largest environmental group focused on the Hudson River Valley. Our team of experts combine land acquisition, support for agriculture, citizen-based advocacy and sophisticated planning tools to create environmentally healthy communities, champion smart economic growth, open up riverfronts to the public and preserve the valley's inspiring beauty and agricultural and natural resources. New York Farms Essential to Economy, Food Security

In New York State and the Hudson Valley, agriculture is a critical component of the local, regional and statewide economy. Farm production and food processing sectors generate \$22 billion annually for New York's economy and employ tens of thousands of workers, yet approximately \$32 million in agricultural output was lost in 2010 due to farmland loss. In the Hudson Valley, between 2002 and 2007 (the most recent years for which data is available), the valley experienced a 10 percent loss in farmland. Considering the region plays a central role in providing fresh, nutritious food to 10 million New Yorkers

stretching from New York City to Albany, this represents a serious threat to food security and public health.

This situation has been acknowledged by the Northeast Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NEASDA). New York State's Commissioner of Agriculture Darrel Aubertine has been a leader in developing a multi-state agenda for the farm bill that calls for promotion of job creation and agricultural market development as well as protection of consumers and the future of farming. The Farm Bill's Conservation Title--and the Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program in particular--is among NEASDA's priorities.

Conservation Easements Critical Strategy for Farm Viability and Urban 'Foodsheds'

Public and private land conservation has an important role in ensuring that farming is sustained and grows to meet increasing demands. Through the purchase of conservation easements, land trusts can ensure that working lands remain accessible to the next generation and viable. Easement programs also provide direct payments to farmers that often aid in sustaining farm operations. Over the past 15 years, Scenic Hudson has put nearly \$25 million directly into the hands of farmers participating in easement programs. This has had a positive effect on related businesses in the agricultural sector (tractor repair, large animal veterinarians, farm supply and value added producers) that rely on farmers as their principle clients. The result has been increased availability of fresh, healthy food to our rural and urban communities, and conservation of natural resources from high-impact development. To underscore this point, a high percentage of vendors and products in New York

City's highly successful Greenmarkets hail from the Hudson Valley Region. The Hudson Valley region is truly the "foodshed" for one of the most populous regions in the country.

The principle of public-private partnerships with Land Trusts is one that must be preserved in the 2012 Farm Bill. Together, land trusts, municipalities and the Federal government have important roles to play in upholding this principle. The Farm Bill's Conservation Title, and the Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRPP) in particular, are critical to enable this dynamic and leverage Federal-local-private investments.

In the past year, significant progress also has been made in advancing these goals in New York State. On Sept. 26, 2011, Congressman Chris Gibson with local farmers, the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Scenic Hudson, Dutchess Land Conservancy, and officials from state and local government announced Federal farm bill funding to complete the purchase of conservation easements on 10 farms in Dutchess and Columbia counties. The total cost of all 10 projects is more than \$3.6 million, including \$1.8 million in funding from the FRPP, \$1.2 million from Scenic Hudson, \$615,000 from the Town of Red Hook, and a grant from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund. Since there are multiple projects occurring in the same communities, this "critical mass" approach to conservation provides a direct infusion of capital to the farmers involved, who then have the choice to invest the funds in the productive capacity of their farms. By protecting multiple farms in a given community, important relationships between farmers and access to credit, supplies and machinery essential for profitable operations are enhanced.

As we complete these projects, we are looking forward to the next application round for FRPP funds. We have been working with other farm families on another assemblage of several farms in Columbia County and Dutchess counties. The impact of strategically conserving groups of farms in these communities will be significant as farmers are provided the certainty that surrounding lands will remain in agriculture; institutions that lend to farmers can be sure their investments are stable; and, suppliers of equipment, seed, feed and other support services will have certainty their clients will remain vital.

Farm Bill Must Enable Partnerships with Land Trusts to Protect Working Lands and Regional Strategies that use "Critical Mass" Approach to Conservation

To preserve these opportunities for the Hudson Valley, New York and northeastern states, Scenic Hudson recommends that the 2012 Farm Bill include and support the following provisions:

No disproportionate cuts to the Conservation Title and the Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program in particular;

Support for the principle of public-private partnerships with land trusts, efforts to protect regions' "foodsheds", and plans that ensure that "critical masses" of farms are protected;

Fair treatment for small acreage farms typical of the northeast in the Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program; and,

If consolidations are considered for Conservation Title Programs, management of programs that protect working lands through permanent easements should be separate from those that seek to retire lands from production.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment. If you have any questions, I can be reached at [Redacted] or [Redacted].

Comment of Elaine Bidstrup

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 8:41 p.m.
City, State: St. Louis, MO
Occupation: Retired School Counselor
Comment: Dear Mr. Akin,

It is time to create a farm bill that supports family farms and healthy food, while at the same time providing jobs for many. "Big" agriculture with its "factory" farms and antibiotic filled animals and genetically altered produce are not doing this. Please support a farm bill that will pay family farmers to grow healthy produce and raise healthy animals, instead of allowing their property to be taken over by big agriculture, which doesn't seem to have this country's health as its main concern.

Comment of Laurel Biedermann

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:29 a.m.
City, State: Colorado Springs, CO
Producer/Non-producer: Producer
Type: Vegetables
Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: I want to be able to have my crops SAFE from GMO contamination. I want to know which foods contain GMO in the stores. I want to be able to water my crops with uncontaminated water that hasn't been tainted with chemicals from 'fracking' . . .

Please don't be short-sighted in looking at these issues. "Frankencrops" provide 'food' but not sustainability long-term. Fracking provides 'power' short term but not sustainability. Please protect the integrity of our REAL food . . . heirloom seeds and water in our State.

Laurel Biedermann.

Comment of Lauren Biedron

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 16, 2012, 1:51 p.m.
City, State: Chicago, IL
Occupation: Nonprofit
Comment: Hello,

I am writing to express my concern about proposed changes to the farm bill that may negatively affect hungry families.

Currently, I work for Feeding America, the nation's leading domestic hunger-relief charity. Prior to this, I worked at Chicagoland's food bank--which provided food to more than 678,000 (unduplicated!) individuals each year through a network of local food pantries.

My entire career has been in hunger relief, and through my work, I have seen firsthand that many families in my community--and across the country--are struggling. Simultaneously, food banks and other feeding agencies are seeing dramatic declines in the availability of food through TEFAP. This, coupled with increasing efficiencies in manufacturing (which often result in less product being available for donation) and rising food costs (which limit hunger relief agencies' abilities' to purchase food to offset the aforementioned declines) have created the "perfect storm" for families in need and the organizations trying to help them.

Simply put, we are trying to feed more people, with less food.

This is a significant problem, and while hunger relief agencies are fortunate to benefit from strong community support, the philanthropic community alone cannot be expected to fill the gap in the number of meals needed to meet community demand.

Further, proposed cuts to the SNAP program--our country's primary defense against hunger--have significant potential to drive more families into food pantry lines and place additional burdens on an already limited charitable assistance network.

Hunger is a serious problem in our country. A strong farm bill will make sure that struggling families can put food on the table. I ask that you pass a farm bill that protects and strengthens programs like SNAP, TEFAP, and CSFP. Families simply cannot afford cuts to these

programs.

Thank you,

Lauren Biedron.

Comment of Wendy Bienvenu

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 2:45 a.m.

City, State: Keene, NH

Occupation: Communications

Comment: The way we grow food & raise animals is a reflection on our values and our humanity, but at this time it is not reflecting well on our species. I want the purest organic heirloom seed foods I can get, not the cheapest. No shortcuts. This affects too many things that are precious: health, children, the environment. Get those corrupt FDA people out and get someone in there to do the job right. Go organic, label everything, and Please No GMO's! Stop with the Frankenfoods. NO!

Comment of Jody Biergiel

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:49 a.m.

City, State: Santa Cruz, CA

Occupation: Organic Certifier

Comment: As a citizen and a consumer, as well as an agricultural industry member, I urge you to re-envision the farm bill and be innovative with solutions. The goal should be to support health and provide benefit to as many people as possible. Social programs and support for agriculture systems that have less impact on our health and the environment--such as organic systems--should be your top priorities. Thanks!

Jody Biergiel.

Comment of Elizabeth Bierko

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 7:44 p.m.

City, State: Yorktown Heights, NY

Occupation: Teaching Artist

Comment: I am increasingly concerned about the quality of our food in the USA. The use of pesticides and genetically modified fruits and vegetables seem to pose health risks for us and our children. I believe GMO's should be labeled, or better yet outlawed as in Europe. Please do not allow agribusiness interests to rank higher than the health and well-being of U.S. citizens.

Comment of Kory Bierle

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 12:51 a.m.

City, State: Midland, SD

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Livestock

Size: 1,000+ acres

Comment: Dear House Ag Committee,

Please streamline the program and sign up process. There are too many deadlines. Also, it would be nice to have some risk back in agriculture for all players. Too many larger producers are guaranteed a great gross margin through programs and subsidized insurance in various forms coupled with mandated markets for their production.

Another idea would be to not only tighten the participation requirements, but to limit payments on a graduated scale for larger producers. For each area and crop find the average size of operation, set the payment rate, and for larger producers still pay, but at a diminished rate for the acres that they operate at for example 50% more than the average. Example: The average size of an operation in an area is 5,000 acres. Pay the same rate to everyone on their first 5,000 acres but from 5,001 to 10,000 pay a reduced rate and pay a further reduced rate for acres 10,001 and above.

For NAP insurance, don't pay renters of BLM or Forest Service land more than their annual bill for summer lease! Sometimes producers get paid to summer their cattle! As a private land producer, I cannot compete with that.

Thank you.

Comment of Daniel Bierma

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:51 p.m.

City, State: Holland, MI

Occupation: Student--Social Work/Divinity

Comment: We have too much corn and soybeans. Stop subsidizing big

industry agriculture by supporting specific crops that are not producing healthy foods. Please support diversity in crops and support the people that consume them. Farmers markets that provide locally grown crops and support the local economy are the way to go.

Comment of John Biernbaum

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:54 p.m.
City, State: Haslett, MI
Occupation: Horticulture Professor, Michigan State University
Comment: Congressman Rogers,

Your support for agriculture in Michigan is essential. It is important that the continued growth of organic and ecological agriculture be supported through the Organic Research and Extension Initiative and Beginning Farmer and Rancher Initiatives. Small scale intensive farming can make a big difference in rural and urban Michigan. The EQIP initiatives including the organic initiative and the high tunnel initiative and the conservation stewardship program can all contribute to jobs, the local economy and our food security and health. Please make the farm bill a priority and be willing to support the efforts of Senator Stabenow to support specialty crops and efforts to protect farmers and our environment. If you want to see how it can make a difference, please ask for a tour of the Michigan State University Student Organic Farm and you can see firsthand.

John Biernbaum.

Comment of John Bigler

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:54 p.m.
City, State: Mount Pleasant, SC
Occupation: Patent Attorney
Comment: Food must be grown in a way that is sustainable and not destructive of the environment or potentially toxic to the people who produce it. The emphasis on chemicals and GMO's is dangerous and damaging our precious resources.

Comment of Jeff Bigman

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:26 p.m.
City, State: Sylmar, CA
Occupation: Graphics
Comment: support organic farming, label GMOs or Remove them from the market. Protect our health! Keep Monsanto Out of the FDA. Our food supply should be sacred, we need to be protected from corporate greed.

Comment of Mike Bilger

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 17, 2012, 3:43 p.m.
City, State:
Producer/Non-producer: Producer
Type: Roanoke, VA
Size: Vegetables
Comment: Less than 50 acres

America needs a farm bill that creates jobs and spurs economic growth--support programs like the Value Added Producer Grants Program by guaranteeing \$30 million of mandatory funding per year. VAPG provides seed money to help farmers innovate in agriculture and create jobs while securing a sustainable path to market-based farm profitability. The Local Farms, Food, and Jobs Act includes numerous provisions that would promote entrepreneurship, job creation, and sustained economic development in rural areas.

America needs a farm bill that makes healthy food widely available to all Americans--including schoolchildren! We must provide flexibility for states to use existing food procurement programs to purchase fresh, healthy food from local farmers and ranchers. The Local Farms, Food, and Jobs Act directly addresses these needs by supporting local, community based food system development--its key provisions should be in the farm bill.

America needs a farm bill that protects our natural resources--protect the Conservation Stewardship Program from unfair funding cuts, and improve it by ranking applications solely on their conservation benefits. Farmers count on CSP and other conservation programs to conserve soil for future

generations, keep water and air clean, and create habitat for wildlife--all while farming profitably. In my work with NRCS and Extension personnel (at SARE PDP trainings where I have presented, the Conservation Innovation Grant that I am involved in, and other contexts), I have become aware just how stretched USDA agency personnel are--especially NRCS--by constant budget cuts. Most of these folks are doing their level best, and inadequate funding is a major factor in their not fully meeting their mandate to serve the farming community through conservation programs, etc.

America needs a farm bill that invests in the next generation of farmers and ranchers--guarantee \$25 million per year in mandatory funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP). We need a national strategy and commitment to support beginning farmer and ranchers entering agriculture. With an aging farm population, now is the time to invest in the future of American agriculture by nurturing new agriculture start-ups.

One current BFRDP project is The Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition Project, coordinated through Virginia Tech with 25 partners, including VABF, Appalachian Sustainable Development, Local Food Hub in Charlottesville, SustainFloyd, and Fauquier Education Farm. This BFRDP-funded Coalition has developed an extensive beginning farmer training curriculum with five modules (whole farm planning, land acquisition and tenure, sustainable production practices, marketing, and holistic business planning), and is establishing a statewide farm mentor network to facilitate hand-on training of new farmers by experienced farmers. Already, many new and aspiring farmers in Virginia are looking toward the Coalition as a vital resource to help them become successfully established. Their success benefits all in our region: more and higher quality local food, more jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities, stronger rural communities, and better resource conservation.

The BFRDP, first authorized at \$19 million per year under the 2008 Farm Bill, is funding many projects and initiatives like this across the U.S., but has also had to turn down many other excellent proposals because of limited funding. Thus, we are asking the House Agriculture Committee to include in its 2012 Farm Bill at least \$25 million per year for BFRDP.

In addition to training and technical assistance, new and aspiring farmers need help gaining access to land, capital and credit resources, and conservation programs in order to realize their goals. The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236) introduced by Rep. Tim Walz (D-MN) and Rep. Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE) contains many additional provisions that address these needs, and thus should be part of the 2012 Farm Bill.

America needs a farm bill that drives innovation for tomorrow's farmers and food entrepreneurs--fund the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) at \$30 million per year in mandatory funding. Investment in agricultural research is vital to continued productivity and innovation in growing and diverse sectors of American agriculture, such as organic agriculture. The Specialty Crops Research Initiative provides vital research information for producers of fruits and vegetables, foods that are especially important for human health and for preventing childhood obesity and type II diabetes. It should be re-authorized at its current level of \$50 million per year. [Note--this is not the same as the Specialty Crops Block Grants which have supported VABF's research on winter and summer squash the past several years. Funding for the Block Grants appears safe; however it does not hurt to advocate for its continuation when you comment on research issues within the farm bill.]

b One regional example of the benefits of the OREI is the planning grant for organic management of a recently-introduced invasive pest, the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug, that threatens to cause

devastating

losses to a wide variety of fruit and vegetable crops.

The project team is

submitting a proposal for a full research and outreach

program to develop

an integrated, organic approach to controlling this pest.

In order to ensure

sufficient funding for this and many other vital research

proposals in or-

ganic production, OREI funding should be increased from

the current \$20

million to \$30 million per year (not reduced to \$16

million as proposed in

the Senate bill).

b Another important research issue is the Agriculture and Food Research

Initiative (AFRI), which is currently the USDA's largest competitive

research grants program. Clarifying language is needed in the 2012 Farm

Bill to (1) ensure that Requests for Application are fully open and competi-

tive (applicants may include individuals or nongovernmental organizations

as project leaders, not restricted to universities and colleges); (2) set aside

at least 5% of AFRI funding for classical animal and plant breeding leading

to the release of farm-ready public (non-patentable) crop varieties and live-

stock breeds; and (3) make sustainable and organic production systems a

research priority within AFRI.

Note that here in the Southeast, the Organic Seed

Alliance conducted a survey and identified a strong need among farmers for organic and locally adapted seed, and

assistance in seed production [this relates to the need for public varieties in general--vital for crop germplasm

diversity/conservation, farmer viability & empowerment (non-patented seed), and adaptation to local conditions and

changing climate.]

The big question that will be asked over and over within the Committee (and on the floor of both House and Senate) will be: OK, how are we going to pay for all the requested programs and their maintained or increased funding? Answer: there has been a major shift in farm bill Funding from Commodity Subsidy programs to Crop Insurance programs, so that the latter now actually spends slightly more than the former. Commodity Subsidies have traditionally had per-farm payment limits and conservation compliance requirements (though seriously undermined by loopholes); however Crop Insurance programs currently have no such limits. It has been estimated that imposing reasonable limits and conservation requirements on crop insurance could save about \$1 billion a year--easily enough to make up for the many small increases requested under the NSAC farm bill agenda, and even to restore Conservation Program funding to current levels.

Comment of Elizabeth Biliske

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:25 a.m.

City, State: Baltimore, MD

Occupation: Retired Social Worker

Comment: The farm bill should focus on encouraging small, sustainable farms and programs that support good nutrition for low income people. The current price supports that encourage corporate farms to produce environmentally destructive non-nutritious food must go. This includes large inhumane feeding lots for livestock and the stranglehold large corporations like Monsanto have gained over food procurers with genetically engineered crops.

Comment of Kelly Billbrough

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:06 a.m.

City, State: Branchville, SC

Occupation: Civil Engineering Technician

Comment: Please help make our food safe and clean, remove all additives and allow local grown foods in our schools. Stop purchasing foods processed overseas and keep our local produce on our local store

shelves. Mostly, Remove additives and items that we know are dangerous to our overall health. Keep our foods all natural.

Comment of Lauren Billings

Date Submitted: Tuesday, April 24, 2012, 12:08 p.m.

City, State: Forest City, NC

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Specialty Crops, Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Small organic and family farms need your support. we are fortunate to have one spouse working outside the farm, who is able to earn a decent living; many of our neighboring farmers do not have outside income, and they live on what they can make on their farms. They (and we) have dedicated their lives--giving up creature comforts in order to produce healthy, organic food.

Please consider passing a farm bill that gives working families the upper hand--not a giant company like Monsanto.

Please discontinue subsidies for corn. It pollutes our land, poisons our drinking water, and leads to obesity in children. It also puts small organic farms at a disadvantage while filling the pockets of Monsanto.

Comment of Charles Bingham

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 8:14 a.m.

City, State: Sitka, AK

Occupation: Corporate Communications Specialist/Nonprofit Health Organizations

Comment: It's time for real food reform, more organics, more community gardens, more family farmers, no GMO crops, real farming with crop rotation (no mono-crop fields, it's how the Dust Bowl started).

Comment of John Bingham

Date Submitted: Wednesday, March 14, 2012, 12:18 p.m.

City, State: Essex, NY

Occupation:

Comment: The House Agriculture Committee's ``field hearing" in Saranac Lake made no mention of the grave threat of unconstrained GMO farming practices to non-GMO farming and farmlands.

GMO buffer zones by GMO farmers, and GMO seed ``Caution" labeling by patent owners, should become mandatory. GMO contamination of non-GMO land (both land in production and fallow, field and forest, private and public parcels) is real and expanding rapidly.

While farmers and consumers struggle for curtailment of law suits against non-GMO farmers, for institution of insurance for non-GMO farmers (paid for by GMO seed companies), and for mandatory labeling of GMO food products/ingredients including GMO animal feeds, all important curtailments, the very critical issue of holding GMO farmers and seed producers responsible for curtailing physical and financial damage to others is being ignored.

Pollen and seed drift buffers need to be mandatory on GMO field edges (e.g., no GMO planting within 600 ft. of adjoining properties). And GMO farmers need to be held legally responsible for removal (without chemicals) of GMO plant contamination, migration of Herbicide Resistant weeds onto non-GMO private and public lands and roadways, and restitution for lost income from lost crop yields. Non-GMO farms must not be forced to lose the field productivity of a 600 ft. buffer zones on their already small parcels.

Unchecked by Congress, without GMO buffers on GMO fields themselves, and without GMO seed labels requiring these GMO buffer perimeter, U.S. farmlands will become increasingly GMO degraded. With loss of soil fertility and infestations of resistant weeds, U.S.

farming, both GMO and non-GMO, would most likely migrate across the landscape, moving increasingly off-shore, ``wherever food grows best (land is cheapest)", devastating the agricultural base of small and large family farms, both at home and abroad, threatening America's future ability to feed itself.

Comment of Harold Birch

Date Submitted: Tuesday, April 03, 2012, 9:07 a.m.

City, State: Piasa, IL

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Field Crops

Size: 1,000+ acres

Comment: As the farm bill is considered I would recommend removing the direct payments. I would recommend at the same time that we continue to support crop insurance as this is the safety net for

farmers. Downsizing the FSA offices and keep insurance sales to the public would be another savings and keep service at the choice of the American farmer rather than limiting insurance choices to government employees. These types of choices can reduce the cost of programs to the government while maintaining the safety net and keeping choices in the public.

Comment of Walter Birdwell

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:52 p.m.

City, State: Laguna Vista, TX

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Support family farmers and individual owners. Continue and increase support for conservation and organic farm programs. End subsidies for corporate and incorporated farms.

Comment of Jason Bischoff

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 10:55 a.m.

City, State: Madison, WI

Occupation: Chef

Comment: What we put in our bodies is the most important thing in the world. America is far behind other nations in passing legislation that prevents GMO's and other experimental foods in our stores/markets/ on our farms. While it is important to grow enough food that can feed the nation, it is also important we don't consume harmful substances. I believe while heatedly that modifying the genes of plants to grow when they shouldn't, be resistant to bugs and pesticides, to only grow once and them die so a new crop must be planted every year--these things and more are wrong. Please pass legislation that stops the unnecessary profiteering from food. Thank you.

Comment of Melissa Bishop

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:03 p.m.

City, State: Setauket, NY

Occupation: Programmer/Analyst--State Employee

Comment: I'm tired of being worried about what is in my food. We are being force fed unhealthy, dangerous, science experiments. Our livestock is tortured and pumped up with so many drugs and force fed food it was never meant to eat.

America was founded on the backs of local farmers & small businesses. It is time we return to our roots. Supporting local farmers & businesses will restore our economy, bring us healthy, local food and stop the torture of livestock. It sickens me that small town America is being wiped out and that local farmers are being forced out of business.

Comment of Scott Bishop

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 17, 2012, 4:28 p.m.

City, State: Olympia, WA

Occupation: Retired/Volunteer

Comment: End all subsidies for all non-organic food operations. Limit speculation on food commodities to folks in the food business. Break up the large industrial agriculture food companies and eliminate their monopolistic practices.

Comment of Janet Black

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:50 p.m.

City, State: Hattiesburg, MS

Occupation: Retired Nurse Practitioner and Former Farmer

Comment: Please come up with a farm bill that supports organic, sustainable agriculture and small farmers. The big agribusiness companies don't need subsidies; the small farmers do.

Do what is right for consumers and support healthy food!

Comment of Laurie Black

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 8:32 p.m.

City, State: Seattle, WA

Occupation: Technology

Comment: As a consumer I want to know what I'm eating is grown in a sustainable way that supports small, local and regional farms rather than U.S. big Ag and imported foods. Our farm policy should be more supportive of this, as well as organically grown foods rather than handing out big subsidies to corporate agriculture that does not practice sustainable farming.

Comment of Paul Black

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 8:27 p.m.

City, State: Des Moines, IA

Occupation: Fitness Instructor

Comment: Right now I am working with a nutritionist concerning food sensitivities I have. It is important for me to know what is in the food I eat and it is also important for me to have some foods as organic. There are many more people in this same situation and this needs to be considered when looking at the Farm bill.

Comment of Sylvia Black

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:12 p.m.

City, State: Portland, OR

Occupation: Housewife

Comment: It is truly time to support the small U.S. farmer. Large corporate farms do much to diminish the quality not only of food but also the environment. On the other hand small farms, particularly organic farms, produce food which has much more nutritional value as well as favorably treating the environment. Small farmers also provide nutritional information to the public at farmers' markets and at other venues they sell their produce. Corporate farms are responsible for much of the terrible products used not to combat insects and other organisms they feel are harmful to their crops, putting the public at risk due to the increased chemical use. Our citizens need to be able to trust their food supplies and not be always fearful of what might be lurking in their fruits and vegetables.

Comment of Taneeka Blackburn

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 9:22 a.m.

City, State: Atlanta, GA

Occupation: Admin. Assistant

Comment: I want organic natural foods at the farmers markets, the local grocery stores. I refuse to battle cancer and other life threatening diseases due to the food I buy in good faith . . . Chemicals and other additives and preservatives are ruining our nation's health more and more as time passes all for the profit of corporate food companies. I have a God given right to live a healthy life to the beat of my ability. Corporate companies should never be able to interfere with this God given right for the sake of profits and capital gains. Never.

Comment of Alloise Blackowiak

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:14 p.m.

City, State: Sarasota, FL

Occupation: Engineer

Comment: Dear Congressmen and Women,

We as a nation are suffering the terrible health consequences including rapidly rising obesity, diabetes and heart disease that are directly linked to the over consumption of sweet and fatty foods that have been subsidized by farm bills in the past. Our medical system is a financial disaster because of the extreme medical costs of diseases like diabetes which killed my father, and it will be impossible to control our national debt without reducing medical costs.

A healthy farm bill can help resolve all of these problems. Please phase out all agricultural subsidies while boosting support for farmer's markets, land conservation and organic farming which protects farm workers against dangerous pesticides.

Our nation does not need to subsidize large farmers and food companies. We can all benefit from healthier not cheaper food.

Thank you!

Don.

Comment of Carolyn Blake

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 6:22 p.m.

City, State: Kapaa, HI

Occupation: Artist and Ag Related Business Owner

Comment: The time has come to stand up for small-farms and farmers! Please do not add additional regulations and barriers on these backbones of rural and urban communities. Instead, stop giving taxpayer handouts to chemical and seed companies, and large industrial farms that destroy communities, degrade our environment and the health and well being of our people.

Comment of Sally Blakemore

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:41 p.m.

City, State: Santa Fe, NM

Occupation: Book Designer and Book Packager

Comment: We need good organic food for this nation.

Big corporate farms torture their animals, provide hormones and antibiotics in the food chain and now the radiation coming in from Fukushima needs monitoring and top soil testing. We must support real farmers and their family farms. Vote For Good Food For America.

Comment of Kathleen Blanc

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:45 p.m.

City, State: Bemidji, MN

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: As a grower and consumer I want GMO seeds and food to be labeled. Sustainable growing methods need to be funded and explored. The public needs to be told the Truth about our food supply i.e., that as is it is causing degenerative disease. I want organic food to be the norm in our country. I want to be told the truth and at the very least be able to make choices based on the truth on the ingredient labels.

I want our government to start acting with integrity and wisdom instead of the money grubbing bottom line stuff that feeds the big business people. I am saddened at who we have become at the political level. I want our government to be responsive to we the people when it comes to growing and being able to eat healthy, wholesome food.

Comment of Lydia Blanchard

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:20 p.m.

City, State: Santa Cruz, CA

Occupation: Psychotherapy

Comment: I require organic, non-genetically modified, GMO-labeled food, where workers, all animals, and soil are fairly treated. I am 78 years old and must have this for my productive health.

Thank you for initiating and voting for these things, thereby showing kindness, respect, and gratitude for others and yourselves.

Between Mothers' and Fathers' Days.

Comment of Kathleen Blank

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:05 p.m.

City, State: Park City, UT

Comment: Please support healthy local food by supporting a farm bill that puts nutrition, conservation and support for organic and sustainable agriculture first, not the best interests of big agribusiness.

Comment of Nancy Blanning

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:45 p.m.

City, State: Denver, CO

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: My family and I eat organic foods because we know it is the best quality and most health providing for our lives. We have our own organic garden and are committed to this mode of food production. We ask that a farm bill will recognize that support of independent food growers is essential to our future. The quality of food is at stake with modification of seed. There is an honesty and integrity to the small farm that is so in contrast to agribusiness whose only motivation and goal is to make as much money as they can without thought for others or the future. Please honor and respect the independent farmer in his or her commitment to protect and guard our food supply as truly life supporting, not just calorie producing.

Comment of Richard & Valarie Blau

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:24 p.m.

City, State: Tampa, FL

Occupation: Food Law Attorney

Comment: The Farm bill as currently drafted should be amended to adjust priorities in favor of (i) providing support for expanded organic and sustainable farm productivity, and (ii) supplying healthier food to our nation's most vital future resource--our children.

In order to accelerate the expansion of our nation's organic and sustainable agriculture, we need more than economic incentives. Agricultural research at the USDA and land-grant universities has

overwhelmingly focused on non-organic methods. While these policies have greatly increased crop productivity, it is time with this farm bill to take the next step and support more progressive agriculture. Organic and sustainable agriculture do not use all of the patented products that conventional agriculture does, and thus do not have the industry supporting research at the same level. This is where we need the Federal government's support. The farm bill must be amended to specifically provide increased support for these initiatives.

As for our nation's children, the farm bill must increase, rather than cut, financial support for school nutrition programs. During the depths of the Great Recession (in 2010-2011), the number of students receiving subsidized lunches rose to 21 million from 18 million in 2006-7, a 17 percent increase, according to an analysis by The New York Times of data from the Department of Agriculture, which administers the meals program. Eleven states, including Florida, Nevada, New Jersey and Tennessee, had 4 year increases of 25 percent or more, huge shifts in a vast program long characterized by incremental growth.

These alarming increases are not abating as the Recession recedes. For example, this year statistics from the Wyoming Department of Education show that 37 percent of students in Wyoming receive breakfasts and lunches subsidized by the Federal government; the 33,052 students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals represent a 2 percent increase over the 32,384 in the 2010-11 school year. Likewise, 60 percent of Georgia's public school students now receive either a free or reduced lunch every day, with an increase of almost 50,000 students in the last 5 years; in 2010, the program fed more than 31 million children.

Not only is the need to feed rising, but we have food quality issues as well that the farm bill must address now. Young Americans consume huge amounts of refined starch, sugar, red meat, very inadequate quantities of fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, and whole-grain high-fiber foods. Copious amounts of research data confirm that those factors are directly related to the increase in juvenile diabetes and will, in the future, increase risk of cardiovascular disease. We now also have very direct evidence that the quality of our school-supplied foods is directly affecting the rates of adolescent obesity in this country.

The farm bill needs to be amended to increase funding for successful and positive food programs such as the Women, Infants, [and] Child[ren] (WIC) program which does very specifically promote healthy food and exclude unhealthy food. The legislation also must be revised to redirect funding for less successful programs such as the SNAP Program, (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program); although well-funded at almost \$80 billion a year, the program functions mainly as a conduit for underwriting the producers of junk foods and soda. While SNAP is an essential program for many people, the quality of what foods qualify this program must be redefined to avoid feeding the existing epidemics in juvenile diabetes and obesity.

Amending the SNAP Program to preclude sugar-sweetened beverages is an obvious place to start. Each day, the government and tax payers pay for the purchase of 20 million servings of sugar-sweetened beverage. That's per day. Such purchases arguably are the single most important contributor, as a single food, to obesity and related chronic diseases. A farm bill that continues to allow spending \$4 billion a year for that one product category which everyone acknowledges offers little if any positive health benefit cries out for change. Congress should amend it to make those changes.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Richard & Valarie Blau,
Tampa, Florida.

Comment of Philip Blaustein

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:43 p.m.

City, State: Parrish, FL

Occupation: Physician

Comment: Please promote organically grown produce. Also cage free, hormone & antibiotic free meat & eggs. Cut back on GMO's please and label them so we know what we're getting.

Comment of Daniel Blaustein-Rejto

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 02, 2012, 8:48 p.m.

City, State: Providence, RI

Occupation: Student

Comment: Dear Representative Cicilline,

I want to express my support for increasing funding for the Assistance for Community Food Projects program under Title IV of the

farm bill, and for increasing funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. These two initiatives support innovation in the agricultural sector and in food access, two areas that our country desperately needs changes within.

Additionally, I hope that you support the Senate's proposed elimination of Direct Subsidies. However, I would like to point out that shifting to crop insurance alone will not support long term farm and crop resilience. In light of predicted increases in climate and weather variability with climate change, crops and farms will likely experience wider fluctuations in yield. Providing insurance alone will not incentivize farmers to adapt to these projected changes. If insurance is to be provided it should at least be tied to incentives for farmers to diversify their crops and management practices in anticipation of future weather and climate risks.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this feedback,

Daniel Rejto.

Comment of Donna Blauw

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 2:55 a.m.

City, State: Lake Forest Park, WA

Occupation: Unemployed

Comment: Please support our organic farmers. We need food not laced with GMO and chemical fertilizers. Please support our organic farmers that are attempting to supply us with food not contaminated by chemical fertilizers and GMO.

Thank you.

Comment of Brenda Blevins

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:41 p.m.

City, State: Lebanon, TN

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: As a parent I have switched over as much as possible the amount of organic foods my children eat. I believe the health benefits alone outweigh the increase in my grocery bill. As an educator I see the effects of unhealthy eating with my students who come from poverty. It is very important to me that more funds are put into making our children healthier as a nation.

Comment of Melissa Blindow

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 11:39 p.m.

City, State: Milford, NH

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Poultry/poultry products

Size: 50-150 acres

Comment: Dear Charlie,

I got some of my very first hands on farming experience at Rosaly's! I'm now a certified organic producer of milk and eggs in Bedford, NH, on town-owned land. As a beginning farmer, I need the support of programs like this to grow my business and enrich the communities of Southern NH with delicious, healthy local food. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture on the next farm bill. My district representative is being copied on this testimony. I am a young farmer and I'd like to share my support for programs that help the next generation of growers build strong farm businesses. As it's estimated that 125,000 farmers will retire in the next 5 years, it's absolutely critical that farm bill programs help citizens get started in this challenging field. I ask that the Committee endorse all of the provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236), including:

Mandatory funding for Individual Development Accounts at \$5 million per year. This program helps new farmers raise capital to start farm businesses and is tested and proven by organizations like Practical Farmers of Iowa and the California Farmlink.

Mandatory funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program at \$25 million a year. This program funds essential education for new farmers around the country.

Authorize a new microloan program, to enable young and beginning farmers to better access FSA loan programs.

Revise FSA rules to make loan programs more accessible to more young and beginning farmers.

Reaffirm the existing cost share differential for BFRs within EQIP. Also, reaffirm the advance payment option allowing beginning and socially disadvantaged producers to receive an advance payment for the project's costs for purchasing materials or contracting services, but increase the limit on the advance payment from 30 percent to 50 percent of costs.

Amend the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP) to make farm viability part of the purpose of the program and to give discretionary authority to the eligible entities that implement the program to give priority to easements with an option to purchase at the agricultural use value, deals that transfer the land to beginning and farmers and ranchers, applicants with farm succession plans, and other similar mechanisms to maintain the affordability of protected land.

These and other provisions within the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act will help new growers succeed and I urge you to include them in the next farm bill.

Sincerely,

Melissa Blindow, Benedikt Dairy in Bedford, NH.

Comment of Charles D. Bliss

Date Submitted: Tuesday, March 20, 2012, 10:09 a.m.

City, State: Maquon, IL

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Field Crops

Size: 1,000+ acres

Comment: I have farmed for 56 years and know that we need a safety net to protect us from volatile income fluctuation. A good sound crop insurance plan is the best form of protection that we can have. Please work to include such a plan in the new farm bill. Thank You.

Comment of Lear Blitzstein

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:19 p.m.

City, State: Alameda, CA

Occupation: Cook

Comment: The government should not let mega-corporations dictate how organic food is labeled, nor should companies like Monsanto force small farmers into debt because ``their" Franken-foods contaminated nearby small farms--and then sue them for copyright infringement!

Comment of Laurel Blomquist

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 7:39 p.m.

City, State: Madison, WI

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Please level the playing field for small producers, and take Organic Standards into consideration. Also, if you want to really do something about the obesity epidemic, you should subsidize vegetables, and not just products that make cheap (but unhealthy) food.

Comment of Larry Blood

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:10 p.m.

City, State: Santa Cruz, CA

Occupation: Radio Producer

Comment: Agribusiness has ruled the roost too long. The benefits of more local operations are multifold. Farmers markets, organic farming, family farms need to be better supported in the new farm bill.

Comment of Cheryl Bloom

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:54 p.m.

City, State: Little River, CA

Occupation: Landscape Gardener

Comment: We need a farm bill that supports the small, organic farmers who do not usually get subsidies from congress like big agribusiness producers have. It is very important to help and allow small farms to grow a large variety of foods that are sustainable for the health of our citizens, plants and animals. It is Not important to subsidize the negative, depleting, unhealthy and detrimental practices of large agriculture at the expense of the health of the land.

Comment of William Bloom

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 6:11 p.m.

City, State: Lovettsville, VA

Occupation: Director of Technology Services

Comment: Dear Representative Frank Wolf,

I need fresh local farm food for my health without government regulations preventing it. This is not just my choosing, but I have been directed by my doctor to go this way of life if I want to live a longer life after several bad health events have happened to me. Please support:

- (1) The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).
- (2) Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.
- (3) The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).
- (4) Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

We do not need the Government controlling farms, especially small local farmers who can barely make ends meet. If the government is concerned about health risks, just have the consumer sign a form with the local farmer that the consumer understands their may be health risks to locally grown farm products. The form is to be kept on file by the local farmer only. This is the most that government should get involved and even that I believe is too much and unnecessary. In this day and age of the Internet, the consumer has at their finger tips all the research available for them to make a wise decision. Also, if the government is really concerned about health and is willing to stand up against big companies like Monsanto, require manufacturers to label if the food in stores has been genetically modified (GMO).

Thank you for your support of local farmers. As you know, Loudoun County has a lot of local farms still that want to help people like me.

Bill.

Comment of Jeffrey Blovits

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 5:15 p.m.

City, State: Vancouver, WA

Occupation: Retired--Engineering Program Mgr. (H-P)

Comment: I have the fortunate opportunity as a regular volunteer for Oregon Food Bank, SHARE and Clark County Food Bank (four mornings weekly). Need for basic nutrition has only increased in the years I have been participating. Reductions in support are a misdirected and tragic error in leadership.

Comment of Elizabeth Blow

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 8:34 p.m.

City, State: Rohnert Park, CA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: There is no reason why farmers and farms, (in particular small to medium sized), can't grow organic, nutritious crops void of genetically modified/engineered organisms (GMOs), and the pesticides & herbicides that accompany such unhealthy crops. I support local farmers/farms. Why don't you as my representative? I don't eat GMO crops do you? Let's reform now in favor of an organic agricultural paradigm shift!

Comment of Jared Blumer

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:07 p.m.

City, State: Ambler, PA

Occupation: Educator

Comment: With oil prices on the rise accompanied by global food prices, a drastic shift towards local food production is essential. The encouragement of small organic farms through subsidies, farm lease programs, and farmer education can revitalize a stalled economy, reduce carbon emissions, and provide much needed jobs for Americans. The public is demanding local, fresh, and safe food and the government can support this growing market through the rational policies described above and the many others not mentioned. I look forward to hearing how the new farm bill will revitalize America's food system and lift us

from this recession. Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

Jared Blumer.

Comment of Megan Blyweiss

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:18 p.m.

City, State: Philadelphia, PA

Occupation: Speech Language Pathologist

Comment: Everyone deserves the right to organic, healthy produce-- free of chemicals that harm our bodies and change the way nature intended us to grow. More health problems, early puberty . . . all of this can be linked to poor food quality due to chemicals. Leave our produce safe!

Comment of Mark Bneolken

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:33 p.m.

City, State: Minneapolis, MN

Comment: Organic farmers must have the same considerations as Big Ag. Farmers must be able to protect the integrity of their crops. They must also be protected from punitive lawsuits that occur because of seed or pollen floating on the wind. They want no part of Monsanto's GMO seeds. They don't want these frankenseeds polluting their efforts. A growing number of us (20% a year and growing) don't want to consume GMO products. Those need to be labeled by law so we can make informed decisions.

Mark Benolken.

Comment of Natalie Boatner

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:01 p.m.

City, State: Pittsburgh, PA

Occupation: Line Cook

Comment: The southwest PA region has so much to offer in the way of farming and bringing farm fresh foods to the population. This is truly one of the most beautiful, healthful and community-strengthening aspects of living here. Please do what you can to preserve and enhance our access to good farming. Thank you sincerely.

NKB.

Comment of Sarah Boaz-Shelley

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:17 p.m.

City, State: Walnut Creek, CA

Occupation: Director of Engineering, E-commerce

Comment: I support the full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

I support fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

I support the implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

I support a U.S. food and agricultural policy that focuses on adopting best agricultural practices that put the health of its citizens, the land and the livelihood of farmers and farm workers over the interests of industrial agriculture lobbyists.

Comment of Roxanne Bobick

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 4:58 p.m.

City, State: Ripley, WV

Occupation: Health Counselor

Comment: We need a new farm bill! The current one has helped to create more obesity, heart disease, and diabetes for the public. Please craft a new bill that will help make healthy and organic foods more reasonably priced and accessible to the public. People deserve to be able to have good food and good health.

Thank you,

Roxanne Bobick,
Certified Health Counselor.

Comment of Clare Bobo

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 8:04 p.m.
City, State: Waikoloa, HI
Occupation: Caterer, Leader of Slow Food Hawaii
Comment: Aloha Mazie,

Please help us move towards good, clean and fair food for everyone by ending subsidies to giant farms and garnering more support for our small local farmers. I urge you to support a farm bill that is more supportive of small family farms and helps move us away from CAFOs and other factory farms.

Mahalo for all you do,

Clare Bobo.

Comment of Leona Bochantin

Date Submitted: Friday, April 27, 2012, 6:35 p.m.
City, State: St. Louis, MO
Occupation: Retired

Comment: We need to protect the poor and hungry. Small and organic farmers need subsidies. Get rid of subsidies for the large agribusinesses, they should not get subsidies. We need the conservation programs.

Comment of Mary Bodde

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:47 p.m.
City, State: Mt. St. Joseph, OH
Occupation: Retired

Comment: The Bill should include financial support for farmers who need it to successfully seed the crops that feed the Nation, e.g., in seeds or other assistance in order to help them carry out their role of feeding the Nation.

Comment of Catherine Boe

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 9:31 p.m.
City, State: San Jose, CA

Comment: I would like you to consider the future for those that have to take care of themselves--making just enough to pay to put food on the table and meet the most urgent needs of our children. I want to have the ability to buy real whole not chemically altered food at a grocery store that is affordable and grown sustainably. Make changes as if they are to benefit Your health not mine. Thank you.

Comment of Diana Boeke

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:22 p.m.
City, State: Culpeper, VA
Producer/Non-producer: Producer
Type: Vegetables
Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: My husband and I make a full-time living from farming our 5 acres in Virginia. We are a diversified farm with vegetables, small fruits, cut flowers, and pastured poultry. We have received invaluable assistance from state and Federal programs designed for small sustainable farmers like us. We are proud to be producers, and provide our community with nutritious, affordable, healthy food. We ask that you continue to support local small farmers by the following:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Comment of Robert Boettcher

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:37 p.m.
City, State: Big Sandy, MT
Occupation: Retired Producer

Comment: It is time for an Organic Farm Bill. Everyone in the U.S. would benefit from a fair and healthy farm bill. It is very frustrating

that the large producers get so much money.

Comment of Jill Bohr Jacob

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 7:03 p.m.

City, State: Ketchikan, AK

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Fruits

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: To the House Agricultural Committee,

A decade ago I helped my mother transition our family orange grove in California into organic production. For the first time in a generation it made a profit AND the soil healed and the surrounding biodiversity was not poisoned and my children could eat our oranges without scrubbing the toxic sprays off.

Please support;

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Thank you,

Jill Bohr Jacob.

Comment of Samuel Boles

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 10, 2012, 1:16 p.m.

City, State: Atlanta, GA

Occupation: IT

Comment: Food stamps are important to the security of our citizens and to the ability of folks to get out of poverty. Don't try to build sustainability or fiscal responsibility on their backs and with the suffering of our weakest neighbors most in need of our protection.

Comment of Christy Bolognani

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 4:42 p.m.

City, State: Buena Vista, CO

Occupation: Medical Assistant

Comment: Organic and sustainable agriculture are integral to the healthy survival of our food system in America. We must pass laws that protect these forms of farming from agribusiness corporations such as Monsanto. Please protect our health and family farmers with a fair Farms Bill that doesn't concede solely to the special interests of large corporations.

Comment of Mary Bolz

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:29 p.m.

City, State: Vacaville, CA

Occupation: Oriental Medicine Doctor and Acupuncturist

Comment: Sustainable and nonchemical farming is very important to the health of humans and animals and plants, and even the Earth itself. If you cannot see this, you will just be one of those Federal regulators bought off by big money. There are things more important than money and you Must take risks. Worrying about your reelection or reappointment is moot. Do something good for your country and Earth.

Comment of Victoria Bona

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:59 p.m.

City, State: Seattle, WA

Occupation: Bookkeeping/Mother

Comment: I want our legislature to support laws that protect every person in the United States by restricting GMO crops (and definitely NOT giving companies like Monsanto the right to sue small farmers whose heirloom seeds have been pollinated w/GMO DNA--something the farmer cannot control), by banning the use of pesticides/herbicides and chemical fertilizer, by supporting the innovation of Organic farming;

by labeling requirements for what is in food and how it was produced (i.e., Label GMOs that are in food products), by removing corn from the diets of cattle and poultry, by scaling back on the mass production of corn (removing subsidies for corn farmers)--to name a few. I feel like legislators (with the exception of a few independent thinkers) rule in favor of big business (money) and throw the rest of us, and the health of the planet, under the train. Please consider the bigger picture of a healthy nation when you prepare the next farm bill.

Thank you.

Comment of Elizabeth Bond

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:56 p.m.

City, State: Santa Ana, CA

Occupation: Research Assistant

Comment: I support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

I do not support cutting WIC or Food Stamp programs. I do not support Monsanto's interest in making all farmers buy and use their sterile hybrids. I am not against all GMO's (it would be great to modify rice to have a complete protein, for example) but see no harm in making growers label them with What has been modified, clearly stated.

Comment of S. Bond

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:40 p.m.

City, State: Naperville, IL

Occupation: Technical Director

Comment: I support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Do not cut \$4 million from the organic research funding nor the funding to support Beginning Farmers.

Do not subsidize insurance programs, which will allow giant commodity farmers and insurance companies to walk away with billions in taxpayer dollars while putting the land, soil and environment at greater risk.

Place limitations on crop insurance subsidies and re-attach soil erosion and wetland conservation requirements to crop insurance programs.

Comment of Michael Bonilla

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:43 p.m.

City, State: Fairbanks, AK

Occupation: Carpet and Upholstery Cleaning

Comment: This is a great opportunity to reform agriculture to be more healthy for Americans. There should be subsidies for organic and vegetable farming and reduction in soy and corn subsidies. There are very few healthy foods that come from corn and soy and by subsidizing them you are encouraging a more unhealthy and sickly America. Thank you.

Comment of Allen Bonini

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 10:18 a.m.

City, State: Urbandale, IA

Occupation: Resource Manager

Comment: We need a strong conservation title in the farm bill and any farm payments or subsidies Must be linked to complete conservation compliance. This is especially true for crop insurance. If my tax dollars are going to subsidize 60% of the cost of crop insurance then farmers should be expected to operate in a sustainable manner and follow an approved conservation plan. No one should ever get a handout from government without some sort of quid pro quo. And farmers are no exception!

Comment of Angela Bonk

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:15 p.m.

City, State: Manitowoc, WI

Occupation: Ladies Buyer

Comment: Please consider the organic farmers and those of us that choose to eat wholesome, farm raised meat and dairy. We believe strongly in truth in labeling. We are firmly against GMO's. We need to know which farmers use Roundup Ready seed.

Comment of Patty Bonney

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 16, 2012, 12:06 a.m.

City, State: Portland, OR

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Every year my daughter-in-law requests donations to the Oregon Food Bank for birthday and Christmas. As a school counselor she sees so many hungry children.

Comment of Andrea Bonsignore

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 6:32 p.m.

City, State: Castro Valley, CA

Occupation: Student

Comment: There should be strict guidelines regarding the production of genetically modified crops. With concern of the future of seed and our food source, authentic organically produced crops should be supported in this bill and genetically modified crops severely restricted. Please do a small amount of research as to the effects of genetically modified crops on biodiversity, the welfare of farmers, and the health effects seen thus far on animals and you will take this comment to heart.

Comment of Barbara Boone

Date Submitted: Tuesday, May 15, 2012, 3:06 p.m.

City, State: La Jolla, CA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: I believe we should emphasize teaching and encouraging people to grow as much of their own food, organically, as possible. This should be happening worldwide. This would help enrich the soil as well as teaching people to live responsibly and eating more nutritionally.

Comment of Malcolm Booth

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:21 p.m.

City, State: Sebastopol, CA

Occupation: Businessman

Comment: The current system of agriculture, and the provision of food in the U.S. is clearly broken and has been for decades. This is rapidly coming to the national consciousness and bottom up changes are happening all over the country despite what the government does. It's time to get on board and get the system fixed. The country badly needs affordable, local, healthy food and education on what to eat and how to grow it. The big corporations are only interested in one thing and the people have suffered as a result. Do right thing . . . please.

Malcolm Booth,
Sebastopol, CA.

Comment of Nicole Boothman-Shepard

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:18 p.m.

City, State: New Orleans, LA

Occupation: Strategy Consultant for Fortune 500 Company

Comment: I implore you to rebuff lobbyists and give us--the consumers--the power and access to choose healthy, local, organic foods

for our families. I don't want GMOs in the food supply, but I have a right to know if they are there so I demand labeling.

I want AG to have programs that actively encourage more local farmers to produce organic, no and low pesticide foods so it is fresh, healthy, supports the local economy, and actually tastes like food rather than Styrofoam.

Subsidies and friendly policies for mega-farms have eviscerated the land, and more importantly, developed a national dependence on too few types and strains of plants and animals. As a subject matter expert on natural and man-made disasters, I am deeply worried about the food security crisis this limited bio-diversity has created. Engage DHS for a vulnerability and risk analysis--the results will be terrifying if disease or pests kills off the too few crops and strains that we grow now mass-produce.

By supporting legislation that makes local and organic farming more achievable, we will resolve our food security risk while catalyzing local economies.

Comment of Martha Booz

Date Submitted: Friday, May 11, 2012, 10:55 a.m.

City, State: El Sobrante, CA

Occupation: Home Gardener

Comment: The farm bill should eliminate subsidies to industrial agriculture, "big" agriculture, and should implement policies that will encourage organic agriculture. Organic agriculture has been shown to be as productive as industrial agriculture, without the use of deadly pesticides and herbicides which don't work against the current crop of Super Weeds bedeviling farmers. Organic agriculture builds soil, and will eliminate the Dead Zone in the Gulf of Mexico if implemented fully across the U.S. Local farmers markets should be encouraged as well. Programs which benefit women with children should be continued and fully funded. Incentives should be offered to farmers of vegetables and fruits, which are healthy foods that fight obesity, another huge national problem facilitated and encouraged by subsidies to industrial agriculture.

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Comment of Margaret Bordagaray

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 10:55 p.m.

City, State: Doylestown, PA

Occupation: Therapeutic Bodyworker

Comment: If you do not regulate and enforce labeling the food we purchase from stores you will force a lot of consumers to either start growing their own food or purchasing from local farmers whom we can trust. I expect as a job holding, taxpaying, and voting citizen to be aware and have the choice of what I am feeding myself and my family!

Comment of Nathan Border

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:49 p.m.

City, State: Thornton, CO

Occupation: Registered Nurse

Comment: We desperately need reform to sustainable and locally connected communities and food growers. Organic foods are the healthiest and safest food and we need national recognition and support for locally grown organic foods and agriculture.

Comment of Claudia Bordin

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 6:13 p.m.

City, State: Sacramento, CA

Occupation: Designer

Comment: Please make subsidies for growers of fruits and vegetables and not give subsidies to meat producers. This country desperately needs to eat more veggies and by having them more accessible and cost effective, more people will buy them. It will also help make our planet more sustainable by (cutting down meat production) lowering toxic gases to our environment that cattle produce. By having a healthier population, it can also lower our nation's health care costs.

Comment of Andrew Boreyko

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:20 p.m.

City, State: Massapequa, NY

Occupation: IT Programming/Systems

Comment: Mr. King, I respect you and all that you have done, and continue to do. Please be pro-active and Do Not cut any funding to any programs vital to our nutrition, conservation and especially programs

funding organic farming and agriculture.

Comment of Joe Borgerding

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 8:13 p.m.

City, State: Belgrade, MN

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Dairy, Field Crops

Size: 500-999 acres

Comment: It is my hope that common sense and fairness come to the rescue of the dairy farmers who will be hurt by the proposed dairy legislation. The 3 percent that produces 50 percent of the milk, and thus the surplus, is being rewarded with the option of multiple opportunities to benefit from loop-holes, while getting unlimited margin insurance subsidies. ``Socialize the risk, privatize the reward" is not the way to fix our broken, out-dated, milk pricing system, and it can-not work because it will rely on the same old price triggers that are not accurate enough, now. It does not even stop the U.S. from being the balancer for the world dairy market, as we will be expected to cut milk when program triggers are met.

Comment of Joyce Borgerding

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 7:57 p.m.

City, State: Spring Valley, WI

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Livestock

Size: 50-150 acres

Comment: We are a small producer of direct marketed meat. Sometimes we have our hayfield in corn before replanting to alfalfa. Even when we don't grow corn, we have this corn acreage 'base' that we get a subsidy for! It seems crazy . . . the ag service calls us even though we say we have no reason to get money! They want us to do it. Lots of farmers get this money for doing nothing. This does not seem a good use of the ag monies. And others, big land owners do Not need the extra subsidy. Please spend the tax money wisely.

Comment of Raymond Borkton

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 17, 2012, 5:07 p.m.

City, State: Costa Mesa, CA

Occupation: Controller

Comment: I'd like the government to support the small sustainable farmers instead of the industry giants that are using GMO's and pesticides recklessly. Support labeling of all GMO's and require more independent testing of GMO's. Please limit the overuse of pesticides. Our bees are a direct result of all this industry abuse. Support the farmers, not the industry giants that keep greasing politicians pockets each year. Be respectful of your constituency and be honorable. Thanks.

Comment of Geraldine Borrell

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 17, 2012, 2:25 p.m.

City, State: New York, NY

Occupation: Music Teacher

Comment: Please make the farm bill one that:

supports farmers, not agribusiness;

creates jobs and spurs economic growth;

makes healthy food widely available, both financially and by location, to all Americans;

protects our natural resources by ranking CSP applications solely on their conservation benefits.

invests in the next generation of farmers and ranchers by guaranteeing \$25 million annually in mandatory funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program.

drives innovation for tomorrow's farmers and food entrepreneurs by supporting the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative at \$30 million per year in mandatory funding.

We need a better farm bill. Please make it happen now.
Many thanks for representing me.

Comment of Michael Angelo Bosch

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 09, 2012, 11:08 p.m.

City, State: Jersey City, NJ

Comment: Please help secure those elderly in need folks who paved the way to America's future. Those who were our past leaders and teachers who help mold and build this country our Doctors lawyers police officers fire fighters our soldiers scientist etc., who are now in their prime and have fallen through hard times, many are going hungry and more needs to be done in this country to help those in need. Please help us help them.

P.S. . . . and please get Mansanto's out of our farms. Thank you.

Comment of Pamela Bosch

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:15 p.m.

City, State: Bellingham, WA

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: Obscenely profitable junk food is destroying the vitality of our people. Profit for health is not a good trade off. Reward organic, small, local agriculture, not mass-manipulated craving. Give double food stamp values for organic produce--save health care expense and energy costs. Life through real food, not consumption for cold hard cash.

Comment of H. Adam Bosschieter

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 9:41 p.m.

City, State: Sanger, CA

Occupation: Developer, Biomass to Diesel Technology

Comment: Support small farms and you support the ability for people to generate their own income.

No need to wait for this elusive promise called a `job'.

Comment of Heather Bostian

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:24 p.m.

City, State: Flagstaff, AZ

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: The Monsanto poisoning has Got To Stop, just cause a few elite think they can get away with killing humans , plant & animal life. You all are Not God and karma will get you in the end. No more GMO, no more messing with what Nature provides perfectly! Get into alignment with yourselves, get into integrity not greed gratification for the moment. Your lives are pathetic.

Comment of Luke Botticello

Date Submitted: Tuesday, April 24, 2012, 6:18 p.m.

City, State: Lebanon, CT

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Dairy

Size: 50-150 acres

Comment: I am a third generation dairy farmer who just started milking a small heard and am just barely staying afloat due to plummeting milk prices and skyrocketing fuel and feed prices. Please help us to make a fair market price that is in line with this trend. I love doing this as did the generations before me and want the fourth generation, my son, to be as proud and secure as this industry could be with your help.

Thank you,

Luke Botticello.

Comment of Victoria Boucher

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:54 p.m.

City, State: Hyattsville, MD

Occupation: Retired Librarian

Comment: Perhaps my most imperative concern I have concerns the nation's health as it is revealed that hormones, antibiotics, genetic modification and other horrors are what one can expect from the food offered in supermarkets. I think that products from small farms are less likely to be tainted. Even were it not for health concerns, I am tired of seeing the survival of the greediest passing itself off as progress. I descend from decent well-educated small farmers and while a librarian I still love the land. I know that farming in the true sense ended with my grandparents and that now it's become just another

irresponsible and heartless mega-industry. I would like to see a farm bill that favored small farms, and really regulated all farms, even those of large contributors to congressmen.

Comment of Dominique Bouillon

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 2:31 p.m.

City, State: Brooklyn, NY

Occupation: Community Outreach Coordinator

Comment: I would like to see more of the Federal Budget designated to supporting healthy food in schools, Farmers' Markets in Food Deserts and supporting small organic farms. Federal funding of corn based products result in diet related illnesses that is costing people their lives and this country lots of money. I would like to see more funds invested in our schools, in our kids and in the environment. Industrial Farming practices are damaging the Earth. We need more organic farms, we need people being educated about food and people given the access to healthy food. Thank you for hearing my thoughts on this matter.

Comment of Katherine Boulay

Date Submitted: Friday, May 11, 2012, 10:01 p.m.

City, State: Oak Park, IL

Occupation: Professor--University of Illinois--Chicago

Comment: I volunteer every week at the Oak Park/River Forest Food Pantry. I have done so since the beginning of 2012. Each week I am stunned at the need in my community. I cannot tell you how many Working families, senior citizens, Veterans, and people with disabilities require our services. Last week a woman my age (45 years) came in. Not only did she not have earn enough from her job to feed herself and her two children but she was unable to spare any money to buy sanitary napkins. She wept with thanks that this was an item with which we were able to provide her. It is a shame that we must beg for money so that working members of our community can occasionally access the most basic of needs. Cutting SNAP would be criminal. It allows us to help people in our communities who have fallen on hard times. Please Do Not Cut Snap!

Comment of Paul Bourdon

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:19 p.m.

City, State: Southborough, MA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Livestock

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: As a small scale farmer, I understand the difficulties in making a farm profitable. I also understand that the industrial agricultural model while able to produce large quantities is also producing large amounts of highly processed food of very low benefit to the consumer and which is contributing to spiraling health costs. These industrial farms receive huge subsidies while very little goes to small farms. These subsidies to the producers of processed foods should be cut while increasing the support to small farms. Thank you.

Joint Comment of Steve and Cynthia Bova

Date Submitted: Friday, April 20, 2012, 10:02 a.m.

City, State: Ocean Shores, WA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: We live on the coast in the state of Washington where Japanese eel grass has recently been classified as a class 'c' weed. This allows for even more spraying of the chemicals imazapyr and glyphosate (Round-Up) on commercial shellfish beds to control this grass, along with spartina grass, which has been sprayed since 1996.

A new chemical--imadicloprid--is being tested to replace carbaryl (SEVIN) for mud shrimp control on these same beds. SEVIN use started in 1964 and, after 48 years, was outlawed in 2012, more than likely after scientists figured out the long-term effects.

There are numerous independent university and research facility studies on the potential dangers of these chemicals to humans. ``The EPA, FDA and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) should immediately order more extensive and unbiased testing for all chemicals in these products--sprayed or otherwise--and, if appropriate, set consumption limits especially for pregnant women and children as they do on other many foods like freshwater fish and other seafood."

Please tell all your family members and friends of the potential dangers of eating chemical/water filtering GMO shellfish that have been exposed to these chemicals. Don't be the guinea pigs for the next new

and improved poison.

Whales are dying and autism is becoming epidemic. Could there be a connection?

Steve and Cynthia Bova.

Comment of Andrea Bowen

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 09, 2012, 3:31 p.m.

City, State: Lawrence, KS

Occupation: Volunteer

Comment: We have a surplus of food to feed the poor and seniors that are having trouble, instead of having this food rot we should be using it to help our nation.

Comment of Laura Bowen

Date Submitted: Friday, April 27, 2012, 6:46 p.m.

City, State: Marion, IL

Occupation: Service

Comment: I know most of you there at Congress have never gone hungry, but imagine having three beautiful daughters . . . and one must go to bed hungry. I was that one that went to bed hungry several nights cause there wasn't enough for all of us to eat. No kid should go hungry for any reason. Keep TEFAP, SNAP, and all other programs going.

The phrase ``No Child Left Behind" should be applied to these programs as well.

Comment of Kathryn Bowers

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:33 p.m.

City, State: Estes Park, CO

Occupation: College Professor

Comment: It's time for the U.S. government to support small farms growing healthy foods for Americans, instead of huge agribusiness companies, whose main concern is profit over healthy products.

The money that agribusiness pours into support for its friends in Congress should be an embarrassment to everyone involved.

The health of our nation is at stake! If we think health care is costly, and we think that health issues, such as autism, are proliferating, then we need to ask some hard questions. What are we putting into our mouths that has not been properly tested and that is causing these abnormal issues? I'm not an expert, but my guess is that it's chemicals in our food that should not be in our food.

I hope you will do the right thing for the American people and design a farm bill that will help lead Americans to healthier lives.

Comment of Sarah Bowler

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 10:59 a.m.

City, State: Niwot, CO

Occupation: Retired Teacher

Comment: We have just moved and are carefully watching our representation in the House. Please support the full endorsement of H.R. 3286, fully funding conservation programs, and all other healthy food laws.

While protecting our food seems a no brainer, it is personal for me. As a brain cancer survivor, my life literally depends on access to good, clean, organic food. Is this America, or what?

Comment of Andrew Bowman

Date Submitted: Thursday, March 22, 2012, 8:25 p.m.

City, State: Oneida, IL

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Field Crops

Size: 1,000+ acres

Comment: As a 25 year old producer, I am deeply concerned with the lack of long-term planning in Federal policies, including in many respects, the farm bill. Specifically, I urge the House Committee on Agriculture to focus on Agricultural Research. I have my own strong opinions on Crop Insurance (a valuable tool and the lessor of all evils when considering subsidies) and other components of the Commodity Title. But the Commodity Title is overblown when thinking about producers my age that have another 45 years in the industry--research now pays incredible long-term dividends. Studies show an internal rate of return (IRR) on agricultural research of 20-60% according to Dr. Robert Thompson, the former endowed chair for Agriculture Policy at the University of Illinois. Instead, I see too much worrying about short-term programs--like the well-intentioned, though unhelpful SURE

Program--rather than the long-term vision that American agriculture needs to remain at a comparative advantage to other global competitors. If we don't start increasing our investment in the future through research, then we are slowly allowing Brazil and other production centers to catch up to our level of competency . . . and eventually, overtake us.

Comment of Cecilia Bowman

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:53 a.m.

City, State: Clayton, IN

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Forestry, Fruits, Greenhouse/nursery, Nuts, Poultry/poultry products, Specialty Crops, Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: As an organic farmer and previously and USDA and ISO 65 accredited organic certifying agent, I ask that you:

Fully fund the Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) at the 2008 level.

Endorse all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Support all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintain EQIP Organic Initiative and do NOT cut the Conservation Stewardship Program.

I have worked in organic farming and certification since 1989. These programs are crucial to the growth and quality development of organic agriculture in the U.S. I urge you to support these programs.

If you have any questions with regard to my experience with these programs I would be happy to speak with you. I have seen them in action from the farm, research and financial assistance level and I have worked with thousands of organic farmers over the years that start at the dawn of the Organic Foods Production Act.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important issue.

Best,

Cecilia Bowman,
Center Valley Organics.

Comments of Alice Bowron

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:55 p.m.

City, State: Minneapolis, MN

Occupation: Retired

Comment: I am a disabled person who had to retire early re: health problems. I am medically ordered to eat organic food due to sensitivity to certain chemicals as well as severe allergies to antibiotics. I deserve to be able to eat organic food--not food laced with antibiotics.

Date Submitted: Friday, April 27, 2012, 9:22 a.m.

Comment: I am sensitive to a lot of pesticides and other aspects of commercial farming; I am disabled and have been medically advised to eat only organic foods.

Comment of Polly Boyajian

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 7:35 p.m.

City, State: Lacey, WA

Occupation: Retired Social Service

Comment: The huge agricultural industry is killing our bees, mistreating pigs, chickens and cows, endangering our health with hormones, pesticides and antibiotics.

Comment of Nancy Boyce

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:23 p.m.

City, State: San Rafael, CA

Occupation: Health Care, Public Health Nurse

Comment: It is time to get this right! The primary responsibility of this bill should be the health and welfare of the public, not the bottom line of corporations.

Comment of Allen Boyer

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:50 p.m.

City, State: Seattle, WA

Occupation: Spiritual Poet

Comment: Please get these demons to stop putting poison in everyone's food. I'm a vegetarian also and would like clear understanding of the ingredients in everything I buy not these big words nobody even knows what they mean. All these suppliers are selfish, money motivated, careless Demons.

Comment of Elizabeth Boylan

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:01 p.m.

City, State: Lexington, VA

Occupation: Administrator

Comment: The more I educate myself on this issue, the more I am afraid to buy anything in a grocery store! From inhumane treatment of animals, to chemicals and hormones in our meat and plants, to contamination, how do we even know what we are putting in our mouths?

Comment of Stephen Boyle

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:54 p.m.

City, State: Detroit, MI

Occupation: Photographer and Website Developer

Comment: As a health conscious consumer I worry about the food that is available to me. Some would say that if I worry about it so much that I should grow my own . . . I can't begin to take on growing everything I eat. If you stay away from the heavily commercialized crops you find that you can taste the impurities in them. The race to improve upon what the Earth provides has led society into very frightful conditions. Government is willing to put excessive funding into existing large capital, heavily commercial farming. Those farms produce the lowest quality mass produced food. Small farmers need much more support, and they shouldn't be required to team up with big outfits, which demand them to sacrifice their quality crops for inferior quasi-foods and Franken-foods. Patented seeds from everything I've read are simply big money keeping start-up business down. If you want to Grow Real Jobs, Subsidize Small Farms and stop allowing seed patents! Give the people their health instead of a medicated crop of bland produce.

Comment of Alanna Boynton

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 11:25 p.m.

City, State: Seattle, WA

Occupation: Research Dietitian

Comment: As a nutrition professional, I believe that the next farm bill is an excellent opportunity to make the kinds of changes that we desperately need in order to ensure a healthier population. We all know what constitutes a healthy diet, and that fresh fruits and vegetables are of key importance, but unfortunately the food system is not set up to allow equal access to nutritious foods.

I support:

Continued funding of nutrition and food assistance programs.

All provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Limiting funds to Concentrated Animal Feed Lots.

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Restructuring agricultural subsidies to fund more farmers of fruits and vegetables rather than focusing on commodity crops such as corn and soybeans.

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Alanna Boynton, M.S., R.D.

Comment of Kent Braathen

Date Submitted: Friday, March 16, 2012, 3:43 p.m.

City, State: Grand Forks, ND

Occupation: Custom Grain Harvester

Comment: There has never been a more important time for a farm bill than now. We need to be assured of a safe, bountiful food supply for the people of this country and abroad. We need to have a crop insurance program that meets the needs of all producers to insure we have producers in this country to help meet the needs of an increasing population worldwide. I don't think many people that live outside of the farming regions in the USA understand the importance of agriculture and a good stable farm bill that will provide a secure food supply. The assurance that we will have the producers here to put the food on the table is and should be a top priority.

Thank you,

Kent Braathen,
VP U.S. Custom Harvesters, INC.

Comment of Denise Bracken-Hodge

Date Submitted: Friday, April 27, 2012, 10:36 a.m.

City, State: Columbia, MD

Occupation: Retired

Comment: I think in your bill, you should give farmers a big tax credit if they agree to donate a percentage of their crops to feeding America and local pantries. Most pantries give a lot of canned items that are loaded with a lot of sodium which is not good for America . .

Comment of Wilma Bradbeer

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 09, 2012, 2:40 p.m.

City, State: Charlottesville, VA

Occupation: Retired Editor

Comment: The new farm bill is crucial for the interests of the poor and the elderly, for the health of the land, and for the economy.

In this time of economic hardship especially, it should retain full funding for the SNAP, TEFAP, and CSFP food programs.

The huge subsidies of the past for wealthy producers of sugar, wheat, corn, cotton and soy should be greatly reduced or removed, and small farmers and organic farmers, who are excellent producers and have received little help, should get more assistance.

Large factory animal farms are hugely polluting of our waterways. Provisions should be in the farm bill to minimize this.

Measures to protect land and waterways should be in the Bill.

Comment of Jaska Bradeen

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:10 p.m.

City, State: Brookfield, VT

Occupation: Agricultural Worker, Homesteader, Entrepreneur

Comment: Members of Congress,

I know there is a lot at play in the creation of the farm bill. It is an unwieldy document, and the interests of many go into its creation. I would ask, as a citizen, constituent, and person involved in agriculture, that you do something huge this year:

Think about the small farmers. Please. Please. I know there is no money in it for the lobbyists who are pushing you. But please, think about the truly small farmers. Please think about the young people, who want to get into farming, but cannot find the financial means to do so. Think about the implications of huge subsidies to corn etc. The dairy industry is broken. Industrial-scale agriculture is broken. We keep propping them up with American tax dollars, but to what end? Short-term gains for a very few? So what? What will that matter when it all starts to really crumble and we cannot feed our own citizens? Please, please, when you write this farm bill, think about the future of agriculture. Not the now, or the yesterday. Not the big ag lobbyists on your doorstep in DC, but the farmers with 2 acres or 2,000, or more, who are just trying to make ends meet. Think about the innovators who are going back to the future, trying to save a broken system. Think about your kids' kids food. Think about how much money we as a country waste on subsidies to huge corporations that DO NOT need it, while we let the little guys drown. Please, think about the future of this country.

Comment of Les Braden

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:13 p.m.

City, State: Madison, WI

Occupation: Landscaper

Comment: I'm very concerned about the influence agribusiness lobbies have over food policy and find myself very scared of what they want to sell me. I see all around me people suffering from mysterious ailments for which we have no remedy and I wonder how much the weakened nutritional value of our mass produced genetically altered foods have to do with that. We are not a nation that values high nutrition and that is a serious oversight. We are already sick from unknown causes and this will only get worse as Monsanto and other chemical corporations strengthen their stranglehold on our food chain. I buy less and less packaged food. I am growing more of my own from organic seeds that have to import. I just don't trust what's on the shelves of the grocery stores anymore. I also can't trust any of our food regulators because they all seem to be influenced by corporate lobbies that bias their actions in favor of their own profit agendas and not public health. It's time for us to wake up and take back control of our food manufacturing with real health I mind and not profitability.

Comment of Lynne Braden

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:15 p.m.

City, State: Bartlett, IL

Occupation: Project Manager

Comment: Obesity and its related medical issues such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer are out of control in America. If we are serious about reducing government expenditures on healthcare, we must also get serious about ending farm subsidies of large, corporate, toxic farm foods (such as corn, dairy, and livestock). If any foods must be subsidized, lets ensure that these are Only healthy alternatives (such as vegetables and fruits, or organic-only foods).

Making vegetables, fruits, and organics more affordable for average Americans will provide healthier eating options which in turn will lead to reduced health care costs. This is overwhelmingly common sense!

I urge you to put the health needs of Americans above the desires of the big Ag lobby and end the madness of our current farm bill once and for all.

Thanks,

Lynne Braden.

Comment of Kathryn Bradford

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 6:36 a.m.

City, State: Rockport, MA

Occupation: Massage/Bodywork

Comment: The large crop/commodities agribusiness has produced many ills. Please fully support the Local Farms, Food, and Jobs Act S. 1773, H.R. 3286. I would like to be a producer/have a family farm and retreat center in the not too distant future. This type of lifestyle can reconnect, establish a strong identity as stewards of the land.

Thank you,

Kathryn.

Comment of Eileen Bradshaw

Date Submitted: Tuesday, May 01, 2012, 2:06 p.m.

City, State: Tulsa, OK

Occupation: Director of Food Bank

Comment: Please keep TEFAP distribution and SNAP funding levels at present levels or increased. Oklahomans' food insecurity and related problems are a deterrent to academic and work performance. This reduces attractiveness to prospective employers considering expansion in our state, and essentially weakens our whole state's economic performance. It is a small investment with a big potential gain, and it is the moral thing to do.

Comment of Susan Brady

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:45 p.m.

City, State: Aspen, CO

Occupation: Wellbeing Counselor/Consultant

Comment: The Roaring Fork Valley could be one of the leaders in organic and sustainable agriculture and this bill would be a step in the right direction for supporting a future which would be healthy for generations to come. Please support it!

Comment of Yasmin Brahmhatt

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 1:00 p.m.

City, State: Philadelphia, PA

Occupation: Physician

Comment: Please ensure that all organic farmers are supported in producing real organic produce and make these foods available to everyone at affordable prices. Please think of our people's health and wellness ahead of monetary gain. Please do not allow corporate businesses/farming companies (Monsanto) to produce non-labeled GM/pesticide foods. Our future is in your hands. Do the right thing.

Comment of Amy Brain

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:39 p.m.

City, State: Walnut Creek, CA

Occupation: Retail Business Owner

Comment: The Farm bill needs to start reflecting clean healthy food and support Organic farmers. The food that is being grown by large Agriculture is making me and my daughter ill. We cannot eat corn, wheat, soybeans.

Whether it is the chemicals on the food, the genetic changes in the food, the big Ag foods make us sick.

Please support healthy food.

Comment of Tim Brainerd

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:33 p.m.

City, State: Natick, MA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Priority is food safety and nutrition, not large agribusiness profits. If anybody needs a subsidy, it is local, small, organic focused producers . . . not the web of interlocking farms with mega-ownership.

Comment of Angie Brake

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:25 p.m.

City, State: San Jose, CA

Comment: Please don't cut funding for organic foods! We need organic is the healthiest thing out there. What you need to do is cut funding for Monsanto and eliminate them from the world. They are poisoning us and killing us slowly.

Comment of Doris Braley

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 2:17 p.m.

City, State: New Brighton, MN

Occupation: Retired Nurse

Comment: I am buying organic food and grown local if I can and NO GMO's. Agribusiness, Monsanto and other companies are getting subsidies, sending products to developing countries stating they are going to feed the starving. I have seen what this has done in other countries where GMO seed has infested a farmers crops. Also why doesn't our media or congress acknowledge the research done in other countries? I guess only money talks if one is being brought off and the heck to the rest of us. So disappointed in our government and even our president whose spouse is promoting organic, better food and he is into free trade and corporations. I will not be alive to see what is happening with GMO's and I wonder if the CEO's of these corporations eat what they promote.

Comment of Anita Brandariz

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 8:23 p.m.

City, State: Brooklyn, NY

Occupation: Retired Civil Servant

Comment: Stop funding factory-farms/agribusinesses. They don't grow food they manufacture it in their labs. Save sustainable farms by funding them and not Cargill, Monsanto, ADM and all those other chemical corporations that don't give a damn about farming are only concerned about bottom lines. Anything to make more money no matter how much harm they do to humans and the planet. Don't support them, please.

Comment of Carissa Brands

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 12:17 p.m.

City, State: Point Reyes Station, CA

Occupation: Habitat Restoration

Comment: I urge you to support and fund the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act, Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236), maintain funding for conservation programs, especially the Conservation Stewardship Program.

Keep subsidies for small-scale, organic and restoration/conservation oriented agriculture practices and programs in the farm bill. Cut out subsidies for big agriculture lobbyists and practices that harm the health of people and land.

Comment of Emma Brandt

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 02, 2012, 2:46 p.m.

City, State: Shaker Heights, OH

Occupation: Student

Comment: U.S. Farm Policy in the present and the future needs to focus on creating an agricultural system that can be sustained for the next 10, 20, 100 years--that is sustainable. The production and wider availability of fruits and vegetables--currently classified as "specialty crops"--should be emphasized, and time and money must be put not only into encouraging new and younger farmers (much of America's farmers are over age 65) but into encouraging them to farm in ways which, aside from any lovely thoughts about organic and local, are not destroying the ecosystems and communities they are a part of. Industrial agriculture is not working for America and the world; at least, it is not working in its present form. Farms should be prevented from leaching harmful substances into their local communities, as in the case of pig farms in North Carolina and manure and fumes, and must treat the soil in a way that allows it to keep producing crops. There is evidence that attempting to integrate the farms into the natural systems they are situated from (see: multi-functionality initiatives in Europe) is ultimately more productive and more economically feasible in the long run than trying to fight them. Shifting focus from meat and commodity crops to vegetables and fruits, which are more nutritious, will assist in this process, as will extending support to smaller farms and beginning farmers. The purpose of the farm bill has not changed much since it was instituted to respond to the needs of farmers after the Depression: a farm bill for the 21st century would address the issues we will face as we attempt to supply our country with food in the next century and beyond.

Comment of Kimberly Brandt

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 12:29 a.m.

City, State: St. Helens, OR

Comment: One need I see is to give farmer/producers tax credit when they donate crops/product to food banks to feed those in need. Until the economy truly recovers and people really get work we need to feed Americans. Food and shelter are real needs. Please give them credit for doing the right thing. Our government doesn't have the means to supply the food so why not work with them and give them a break for helping as you do for banks, auto industry, corporations, etc.

Comment of Nancy Brandt

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:30 p.m.

City, State: Chicago, IL

Occupation: Retired

Comment: I am just a consumer, but I care about our farms and farmers. I urge you to use the savings from no more direct subsidies to promote sustainable farms and local food--not use it for subsidizing insurance mostly for big farms or agribusiness. This is your opportunity to do something really great and bold. Surprise us!

Comment of Jeanne Brannigan

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:42 p.m.

City, State: Orland Park, IL

Occupation: Retired

Comment: The ag industry needs real reform. Our food quality has deteriorated to the point where health conscious people have to work far too hard at finding food that is worth eating (such as organic). Let's get back to nature and good farming practices of old.

Comment of Mike Brannin

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:52 p.m.

City, State: Orlando, FL

Occupation: Retired School Counselor

Comment: We need a farm bill that allows independent and organic farmers as much consideration as the mega ag producers. We also need a bill that allows the consumer the ability to choose if they want organic and chemical free poultry, meat and produce.

Comment of Tami Bransford

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 09, 2012, 2:33 p.m.

City, State: Jacksonville, FL

Occupation: Paralegal/Business Owner

Comment: Working in my profession I see a lot of elderly without the funds to buy food and having to seek out food donations because their income is limited and medical and medicine costs are overwhelming. I had a family member pass away untimely due to his inability to afford his blood pressure meds. A client that received only \$6 a month in food stamps and depended on her church for food because her medicine costs exceeded \$200 a month. No American should live in such a way . . . what's wrong with taking care of our own? We seem to be too wrapped up in taking care of other countries problems and we ignore the ones right under our nose in our own country. It's a shame.

Comment of Lynn Brantley

Date Submitted: Wednesday, March 28, 2012, 6:11 p.m.

City, State: Glenn Dale, MD

Occupation: President & CEO

Comment: I have worked on hunger issues here in the Washington, D.C. community for over 43 years. I have never seen a time of such overwhelming need as now. The farm bill has far reaching consequences for farm families, for people who suffer hunger, cities, for agribusiness and for the economy in general. I hope that congress understands that this is a time to remember who we are as a people and nation. We must remember our faith traditions, and that to feed the hungry is at the very core and fabric of our being. Please do not cut food and nutrition programs that help people feed their families and to maintain a degree of sanity as they struggle to survive this economy that has striped and eviscerated their souls of the very things that it takes to maintain and keep a family healthy and hopeful. Bread is the very essence of life, the ag bill and the nutrition programs are central to survival. When we speak of family values there is no greater value than that of being able to feed ones family. I pray that congress understands the gravity of the situation that so many good, hardworking people in this nation are facing. Come walk in their shoes to understand. I pray that you will vote in a way that is in keeping with who we are as a nation! So that all may eat, food is a gift to us all, our own humanity is determined by how we respond.

Comment of Katherine Bratton

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:27 p.m.

City, State: La Crescenta, CA

Occupation: Law Firm Administrator

Comment: As a consumer, I am very much concerned about protecting small farms as well as producing food free from pesticides and antibiotics. We rely on the government to control monopolies and quality and appreciate all you can do to ensure healthy competition and food products. Thank you.

Comment of Joan Braun

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:49 p.m.

City, State: Weld, ME

Occupation: Psychotherapist, Mom, Grandmother

Comment: I want food grown without pesticides. I want non-organic pesticides banned.

I do not want GMO foods grown anyplace in the United States or shipped anyplace in the world.

I want to know that my food is organic and safe

I want any GMO foods clearly labeled.

I don't want any subsidies for big agriculture.

I want sustainable agriculture that does not overuse or harm the soil it's grown on.

I want no impediments put in the way of small farms, or rules that make the cost of meeting them prohibitive.

I want small farmers to be able to sell their food locally without elaborate requirements. The buyer knows the farmer and the product and can take care of himself/herself.

The same with the sale of raw milk. Let the consumer make the decision about whether to consume it or not.

Thank you. I am your employer, Agriculture Committee. My taxes pay your salary. Please start listening to us.

Comment of K. Braun

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:51 a.m.

City, State: Great Cacapon, WV
Occupation: Middle-Class Worker

Comment: If you truly represent the public, you must give equal footing in All Legislation to practitioners of organic and sustainable farming methods--including the small family farmer, the icon of American ingenuity and entrepreneurship--which we want to see continue and Thrive in reality--not just as an archaic and quaint caricature that our children's children will never see. This lies in your hands. The Earth provides a perfect example of continuation--which the human race would do well to embrace and emulate.

Comment of Stephan Braun

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:37 p.m.

City, State: Decatur, GA
Occupation: Executive Chef

Comment: We need the Variety from the local small Farmers to feed and educate your guest, Children and future generations to come. If we leave this to big corporations, big money and GMOs, that will be the end, they look only out for their profit and the shareholders. If we lose the small farms and the support their off, we lose a choice, we lose a part of the future, we lose sustainable growth. Small family farms. If we give up the easy what will they take from us next, everything needs to be conform, run by a few, big money to be made for a few. What will they eat, chew on their dollars or looking for real food. What will happen with the next generations to come, our children, climate change.

Comment of Jim Brauner

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:16 p.m.

City, State: Ballwin, MO
Occupation: Business Owner

Comment: It is imperative that we stop catering to agribusiness profit desires but rather to what is good for 'The People' and the farmers/producers. Enough is Enough!

Comment of Kolya Braun-Greiner

Date Submitted: Tuesday, May 15, 2012, 5:26 p.m.

City, State: Takoma Park, MD

Comment: I am concerned about the future of farming in our nation. We need farm policies that promote greater soil conservation, sustainable farming practices, and organic methods to preserve health and food producing capacity for future generations.

Comment of Jennifer Braverman

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 17, 2012, 4:12 p.m.

City, State: Syria, VA
Occupation: Part-Time Paralegal

Comment: We need fresh, local foods for our nation to be healthy. Low or No spray foods are better for our children, and will help save the bee population. We need to keep our roots with the soil, which is LIFE. Training new farmers and making it a viable profession is very important to our nation.

Comment of Denise Brazell

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:05 p.m.

City, State: Wilmington, DE
Occupation: Access Coordinator Davidson School

Comment: I meet people on a weekly basis who are very interested in what they eat. We want to know how and where the food was grown, and we also want to know that the food is not laden with potentially harmful chemicals. Knowing that there are farmers who want to grown organic foods makes us hopeful that we can enjoy quality foods that benefit our health . . . we should have that choice. Do not interfere with their efforts to produce the kind of food that I and others want available to purchase.

Comment of Allison Brazil

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 11:47 a.m.

City, State: Olalla, WA
Occupation: Technical Professional and Hobby Farmer

Comment: I do not want to consume pesticides or genetically modified food. I do not want to plant GMO seeds that have been created to withstand pesticides such as Round Up--do I want to eat fruits or vegetables that come from plants that have been doused with Round Up--I

don't think so. We need to stop subsidizing corn, soybeans and wheat. These are the highest allergen foods. I won't buy dog food with those ingredients so why would I want to eat them. I don't want to eat corn fed beef. There needs to be land set aside for organic farming and non GMO seeds available to small farms. When possible my family buys organic and during the summer we eat what we grow.

Comment of Robert Breeden

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:33 p.m.

City, State: Philadelphia, PA

Occupation: Retired Federal Employee

Comment: The view that small farmers using organic methods will become increasingly vital over the next 2 decades, as factory farming with terrifying chemicals produce Frankenfruits and Veggies at great cost to the environment and our health, is gaining more and more acceptance. Indeed, such large farms may, in the not-too-distant future, no longer be viable, as the consequences of Peak Oil set in, making transportation of products to distant cities cost-prohibitive. Local, organic farming may be the only way to feed our people. This is not the time to cut funding to what may be our lifeline.

Comment of April Brees

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:39 p.m.

City, State: Tacoma, WA

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: Cutting funding to vital programs such as nutrition, conservation and support for organic and sustainable agriculture is not in the best interest of America. We used to be a nation proud of its products and producers, now moms are scared of what we're forcing into their children's lunches and subsidies to big agro have killed the small farmer. Where is the integrity?

Comment of Nadine Breneman

Date Submitted: Friday, March 16, 2012, 1:25 p.m.

City, State: Stockton, CA

Occupation: Secretary

Comment: I ask you endorse a very strong FARM BILL that will support those groups feeding the hungry. We cannot sit by and not do everything possible to feed our own. We owe it to our citizens to cover their needs. Let our eyes and hearts be as open to our population as to the rest of the world. Too many Americans are hungry every day. Far Too Many Children Are Going Without Food!

Comment of Don Brennan

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 11:16 a.m.

City, State: Roan Mountain, TN

Occupation: Retired

Comment: I am not a weed to be poisoned by roundup resistant produce or a commodity for the profits of agribusiness. I am trying hard to grow organic non GMO food for my family--we are what we eat--our gov. should be helping us grow local healthy food for the people, not shareholder profits.

Comment of Rick Brenner

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:46 p.m.

City, State: Jamul, CA

Occupation: Accounting

Comment: Hi,

Please take these comments into account when considering the farm policy in the USA.

The first thing I'm stunned about is how anyone can argue rationally that the public shouldn't be allowed to know what they are eating! It's beyond comprehension that our government could support the non-labeling of GMO foods for example. What could possibly be the rationale behind that besides being bribed by Monsanto, etc.?

Also, I support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Thank you,

Rick.

Comment of Judith Brennick

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:37 p.m.

City, State: Weymouth, MA

Occupation: Registered Nurse

Comment: Please Consider this bill. Allergies have increased in our children; cancer is on the rise. We fill our food with chemicals, etc; and don't seem to have the power to stop Monsanto and others from taking over the food supply. Be very afraid of Round Up. We are destroying the Earth with our chemicals. We want expediency and instant gratification with no concern what it is doing to our environment, not to mind ourselves. Help keep this world be a little safer for your grandchildren--be a part of leaving them a safe legacy! Thank you!

Comment of L. Bresnan

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 1:57 p.m.

City, State: Ballwin, MO

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: Please vote for us and our children as the future of the U.S. After years of vague illnesses misdiagnosed as hypoglycemia, migraines, insomnia, possible early fibromyalgia and more and one child with memory issues, the other ADD, we all turned out being poisoned by heavy metals and reactions to chemical exposure despite no typical or obvious environmental exposures. We are recovering, but have lost much in the interim. Ensuring our food supply is handled well, testing chemicals that are used for food Before they are allowed on the fields or in production and that the water and land that crosses our food's path is essential.

Therefore I plead with you to support:

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Our futures are directly tied to your vote. We rely on you. Thank you.

Comment of Jeannine Bressie

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:28 p.m.

City, State: Santa Rosa, CA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Please stop rewarding the worst polluters in the country, the agribusiness multimillionaire Monsanto friendly producers of the worst garbage on the planet. There are responsible farmers who are good stewards of the land, who are struggling, while you continue to reward those who do the opposite. Reward the small family farmer who raises food sustainably, and Responsibly.

Comment of Alexis Bressler

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 16, 2012, 12:00 p.m.

City, State: Blacksburg, VA

Occupation: VISTA Volunteer--Hunger Relief in the New River Valley

Comment: I believe that Americans need a farm bill that ensures that all citizens have access to fresh, healthy produce. This includes the preservation of current Federal food assistance programs or the development of new programs that a more locally based. If current food assistance programs are to undergo budget cuts then funding should be reallocated to support locally based agencies that meet the needs of food insecure individuals in their communities.

Comment of Nina Breton

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 16, 2012, 9:04 p.m.

City, State: Beaverton, OR

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: I am looking for healthy food. I would like to see a farm bill that supports variety in production. Our produce has less nutrients in it now compared with several decades ago. I am interested in a bill that supports sustainable practices to restore nutrition.

Comment of Marcie Brewster

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 3:06 p.m.

City, State: Huntsville, AR

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Fruits, Greenhouse/nursery, Poultry/poultry products, Specialty Crops, Vegetables, Other

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Please find a way to support a diversified, sustainable farming approach. Please also look for ways to support small, organic/sustainable farms that grow fruits and vegetables. Right now it costs more to eat healthy foods like vegetables and fruits than it does to eat unhealthy ones like chips and sugary snacks. We should be looking for ways to make healthy food more affordable. Large, concentrated food production systems such as we have today, are more susceptible to contamination. We need more small farms spread out around the nation. There are plenty of people who would like to be farming if it were economically more viable. Additionally a more broad based agricultural system would make for a more secure food system for our country.

Comment of Roger Briand

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 11:53 a.m.

City, State: Eugene, OR

Occupation: Self-Employed/Business

Comment: We'd like to see far more tax dollars going to subsidize the farmers who are committed to organic growing. We know the corruption of our laws helps the chemical companies because they give huge amounts of money to our politicians.

Our legislators, with few exceptions are driven by the money that has corrupted our system via the organized criminals who brought us Citizens United. Let's start with all getting together to rescue our democracy by taxing the ultra-wealthy corporation/banks so they don't have so much money to corrupt our laws. Down with Citizens United!

Comment of Ella Brians

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 3:43 p.m.

City, State: Princeton, NY

Occupation: Ph.D. Student

Comment: A safe, sustainable farm plan is essential to our food security. Small, family farmers have led the way here, while large scale monoculture farming strips the soil and leads to a vicious cycle of pesticide resistance, run off and erosion.

Supporting local farms by cutting subsidies to agribusiness, creating flexible inspection procedures and helping farmers stay on--or start--small farms is good for farmers, good for the economy, good for the environment, and good for consumers.

Comment of Adrienne Brietzke

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:14 p.m.

City, State: North Little Rock, AR

Occupation: Public Affairs and Community Relations

Comment: While congressional Republicans refuse to consider raising the taxes of the 1% to match my percentage--nearly 30% while they pay 15-17%, and congress stonewalls about getting rid of big oil subsidies--to the tune of \$11 Billion--people in the United States Go Hungry--and frequently don't know where or if the next meal is going to come. How Can Congress Allow This State Of Affairs? Big Oil is making historic profits--note: profits are what they get After they invest in research and development--so the excuse of "higher costs involved in harder to recover and refine oil products" doesn't justify starving citizens in our great country, while adding more pork for those who don't need it.

Comment of Cathy Brigham

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 9:41 a.m.

City, State: Chardon, OH

Occupation: Insurance Adjuster

Comment: I think the health of our nation depends on a sound food policy. The public needs to have confidence in the safety of its food supply. The farm bill needs to protect family farms, local versus corporate production. It is no coincidence that the rise in chronic disease can be traced back to the beginnings of a food policy based on industrial farming. Please consider the well being of the consumer, the farmer, the animals and the land as you write the new farm bill. Corporations are Not people and do Not deserve the same consideration, which comes at the expense of public well-being.

Comment of Daniel Brigham

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:20 p.m.

City, State: Houston, TX

Occupation: Consultant

Comment: Here are a few items that I support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods,
Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

fully funding conservation programs, such as the
Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that
enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to
compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer
and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Something To Give Me The Option To Avoid Consuming Any
Genetically Modified Foods.

Legal Recourse For Organic Farmers Whose Crops Are
Contaminated By Unsafe, Untested Genetically Modified Foods!

Submitted Letter by Gail Brill, Founding Director, Adirondack Green
Circle

Date: March 7, 2012

To: Hon. Frank D. Lucas,
Chairman,
House Committee on Agriculture,
Washington, D.C.

From: Adirondack Green Circle, Saranac Lake, NY
(www.adkgreencircle.org) a project of Adirondack
Sustainable Communities, Inc. (www.adksc.org) Gail Brill,
Founding Director

Re: 2012 U.S. Farm Bill

Dear Representative Lucas,

The Adirondack Green Circle urges our government to promote policy
that supports small, rural farmers.

Small farms provide fresh, local, ecologically grown food.

Americans increasingly seek fresh, local, ecologically grown food.
This is evident by the growth of farmers' markets and consumer demands
on supermarkets for both local and organic products. According to the
National Restaurant Association, 2012 marks the fourth year running
that "locally sourced food" is chief among the top food trends.

Here in the northern-most rural area of New York State, prices for
fresh local food are much higher than prices for similar food in the
supermarket That is the case because consumers are paying the full
price of locally grown food, rather than paying for supermarket food
that has been heavily subsidized by the government. One result of this
is that many people who desire fresh local food simply cannot afford
it. A second result is that farmers struggle to stay in business. But
according to U.S. Agricultural Census data, more than 60 percent of
U.S. small family farmers don't even qualify to receive Federal
subsidies under current agricultural policy in our country. Instead,
this nation's farm policy favors agribusiness and industrial farming.

\1\ <http://www.organicconsumers.com/ofgu/subsidies.htm>.

We have willing young farmers here in the North Country of New York who have demonstrated their passion, season after season, to make a go of farming. Of these numerous small farms, more than 30 offer community-supported agriculture. As this movement to eat fresh local food (rather than food that has been shipped long distances at great energy costs) grows, we look to the government to help our local farmers and our local consumers by creating policy which supports our small farms, instead of favoring large-scale commodity farmers. According to the Environmental Working Group, only \$100 million taxpayer dollars each year are earmarked to support the increase in local food production, distribution, and consumption as compared to nearly \$12 billion in annual subsidies awarded to large scale, agribusiness and industrial production of commodity crops. As the United States faces unprecedented crises on the front lines of both the national economy and fight against obesity and diet-related illnesses, now is the time for our government to support and embrace the growth and harvest of whole, real food, instead of subsidizing and encouraging the large scale farming of commodities that are used heavily in processed food.

It is more cost effective to provide healthy, local, ecologically grown food than pay health care costs.

We cannot deny the negative effects of government subsidies to large commodity crops. The incidence of obesity and subsequently diabetes in our population is growing at an alarming rate. Obesity threatens the health of Americans and increases the cost of health care enormously. A recent study revealed that the average American has gained 16.3 pounds during the 21 years between 1988-2008, resulting in an average weight gain of 0.77 pounds annually.² Obesity has become a huge problem in the United States with over 1/4 of the population categorized as obese, and a major cause of obesity is the availability of inexpensive (in price per calorie) heavily processed foods, especially snack food. Almost without exception these foods contain sugar, and often high fructose corn syrup, commodities that are heavily subsidized by the government.

² "Evaluating Advertising Strategies for Fruits and Vegetables and the Implications for Obesity in the United States", Jura Liaukonyte, Bradley J. Rickard, and Harry M. Kaiser, Dyson School, Cornell University and Timothy J. Richards Morrison School of Agribusiness, Arizona State University.

Dietary change is a major way to begin to limit the obesity epidemic. It is certainly more cost effective for our government to support small farms that can deliver fresh, ecologically grown food, than it is to pay for health care associated with obesity and diabetes. Consuming local, ecologically grown food brings known health benefits that include: (1) higher levels of beneficial nutrients, like antioxidants, in local organic produce and (2) a different and healthier fat composition in organic meat from pastured animals.³ Locally grown food also promotes food safety and serves to lessen contamination issues, since it meets with fewer chances for adverse conditions and spoilage along its path from farm to table, than its average grocery store counterpart.

³ The Omnivore's Dilemma, Michael Pollan, The Penguin Press, NY, 2006.

Locally grown food saves energy.

The fossil fuel consumption resulting from shipping, trucking, and flying food cannot be underestimated. Local foods travel short distances to get to consumers. This reduces the energy transportation costs of our food supply, and conserves fossil fuel. Also, farms that use ecological growing practices are unlikely to use nitrogen fertilizers, thus decreasing the use of fossil fuels needed to produce them, and also decreasing release of nitrous oxide, a powerful greenhouse gas.

Small Farms = Jobs, Economic Revitalization, and Community Growth.

Small farms can and do result in thriving local business revitalization and the economic growth of communities both big and small. A successful farm in New York State has many a willing and ready customer, and our state ranks second nationwide for the number of farmers' markets.⁴ The Farmers Market industry in New York State is a vibrant and rapidly growing industry that encourages local business

growth, economic development, and tourism. Local markets serve to make the town or village center where the market is held a destination attraction. Add live music, artisan festivals or theater performances to these market events, and this factor grows exponentially. The spillover from these markets effectively increases tourism, adding tax revenue and job growth to communities, and the residual beneficial effects of the community building atmosphere of a Farmers Market are without measure.

[4] <http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/resources/faqs.html>.

But the economic growth which the local food movement brings is not limited to small, rural areas. Consider that in the midst of our recession-era economic climate, the \$4.8 billion sales of local food nationwide in 2008 were predicted by the USDA to reach \$7 billion during 2011 [5]--a growth figure unmatched in most other economic sectors in recent years. Farms can drive a local economy; not only do small farmers bring a product to local markets, they create job growth for farm workers who in turn purchase products, equipment, and services in their communities. It is clear that growing food and promoting its local distribution and access is an American investment in America that truly generates dollars.

[5] <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5070995>.

Now is the time to create good farm policy in the 2012 Farm Bill.

Real change can happen for the scaling up of local food economies in our nation by the support of policy reforms outlined in the Local Farms, Food and Jobs Bill, introduced by Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-Maine) and Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and cosponsored by 63 representatives in the House and nine in the Senate. This bill aims to connect economic interests of small-scale farmers and ranchers with the ever-rising consumer demand for accessible and affordable local ecologically grown food amid what is currently a highly decentralized local food system. New policy proposed by the Local Farms, Food and Jobs bill will allow for increased aggregation and distribution of these fresh products, making it easier for locally grown and raised food to reach not only household consumers and restaurants, but the populations served by schools and hospitals while increasing access to such food for low-income senior citizens and food stamp recipients. Increased financial support for the Specialty Crop Block Grant program will enhance access for small farms to affordable credit, appropriate crop insurance, and other vital economic supports for smaller scale and beginning farmers. The cost of these programs is in the millions--only a fraction of the \$18 billion in tax dollars annually which is now funneled to those large-scale farms currently reaping the lion's share of the today's farm subsidies. [6] Also poised to make a difference is the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act of 2011--introduced with bipartisan support of 18 cosponsors and referred to the House Committee on Agriculture in October--which promotes USDA programs, trainings, competitive grants and micro-lending programs to beginning farmers.

[6] <http://grist.org/farm-bill/2011-10-24-will-lawmakers-rewrite-the-farm-bill-in-less-than-two-weeks/>.

In summary:

The rise of the small farmer who struggles to find credit, constant consumer demand for affordable and locally grown whole foods, the U.S. economic climate, and the steady increase in our nation's obesity--each of these things exemplifies the need for a responsive and democratic farm bill in 2012. It cannot be denied that the local food movement is thriving but the support of food policy makers on the national level is vital to its ultimate success in our lifetimes.

This statement is also supported by Sam Hendren of the AuSable Valley Grange (www.ausablevalleygrange.com), and Fledging Crow Farm in Keeseville, NY (www.fledgingcrow.com).

Gail Brill,
Founding Director,
Adirondack Green Circle.

attachment

Who is the Adirondack Green Circle?

Started in 2007, we are a regional group of 200 concerned citizens

that tackle issues in four arenas: climate change, over-consumption, self sufficiency and energy use.

How do we do that?

We are advocates for our small, local farm community that surrounds us.

Three years ago we started the Farm 2 Fork Festival in Saranac Lake that draws well over 500 people from the region to see home cooks cooking dishes using vegetables and meats from the farmers market.

In 2011 we started Chefs & Farmers: Taste The Adirondacks. Saranac Lake's first food tasting pairing local chefs and area farms.

We lead "Lost Arts Workshops" that teach people long forgotten skills such as cheese making, pickling and fermentation, soap making, bread making, wild edible plant identification and more.

We have led workshops on Sustainable Living, Voluntary Simplicity, Ecological Eating and Climate Change.

We set up tents and receptacles and collect recyclables at area events.

We bring pertinent and groundbreaking films to the community to raise consciousness through our annual Wake-Up Film Festival.

We partner with the area college and high school environmental groups: Youth Climate Summit at the Wild Center, Junk to Funk at North Country Community College and more.

We got the Mayors of Lake Placid and Saranac Lake to sign the Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement in 2008.

We were instrumental in getting the Saranac Lake Community Garden off the ground.

We started the Green Grace Project which delivered baskets of local food to needy families on Christmas Eve.

Our founding Director traveled to Finland on a State Department grant to learn about Climate Change and to build bridges between two countries facing similar economic changes as a result of Climate change.

Comment of Shannon Brines

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:22 p.m.

City, State: Dexter, MI

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Dry Beans & Peas, Fruits, Greenhouse/nursery, Nuts, Poultry/poultry products, Specialty Crops, Vegetables, Other

Size: 50-150 acres

Comment: As an organic (not certified) fruit and vegetable farmer of over 80 acres I think we should be transitioning from subsidies and programs that create unhealthy food to programs that work towards more healthy food. Ultimately I'd like to see a level playing field for all producers in the distant future where all subsidies are phased out.

Currently, of programs to be in the farm bill I would back:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Comment of Kathi Brinkman

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 4:04 p.m.

City, State: Greensboro, NC

Occupation: Customer Relationship Manager II

Comment: Monsanto needs to be stopped! Farmers need money to continue to send wholesome produce to the grocery stores so we can eat healthy and not put GMO's into our bodies.

Comment of Gail Brinkmeier

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:58 a.m.

City, State: Saint Paul, MN

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Livestock

Size: 500-999 acres

Comment: I am a 5th generation farmer in Minnesota. This is what my family has been doing since we came to America.

My farm used to be far out in the country, but now it is in the ex-urbs. I know that in my children's life time it will cease to be a farm and become part of the city.

That is not my ideal development, but I am OK with it, it is the life of place to move, change and grow.

What I am not OK with is the current state of agriculture in America.

There should be a symbiotic relationship with the hard working honest people who grow real food and the everyday average American who buys it. Special interests and monopolistic middle-man should not reap the King's ransom in this exchange.

As the committee considers the 2012 Food and Farm Bill, I urge you to:

Support our fight against hunger by maintaining and strengthening critical nutrition programs in this time of unprecedented need. We must not solve our budget problems on the backs of those experiencing food insecurity, including our most vulnerable--our children, the elderly, and the disabled;

Provide an even "plowing" field by fully funding programs that support beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, organic farming, regional farm and food economies, and rural development. We need more farmers and ranchers, more sustainable food production, and more economic opportunity in our food system;

Support family farmers that really need help, not the biggest farms that don't: End subsidies (aka direct payments and countercyclical commodity programs), and replace them with loophole-free agriculture risk coverage. Additionally, implement a cap on crop insurance premium subsidies;

Ensure that limited conservation funding maximizes lasting environmental benefits: Limit funds to Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) for animal waste management infrastructure by eliminating the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Livestock Set-aside and protect the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) from disproportionate cuts, and improve it by ranking applications solely on their conservation benefits.

Thank you for your time and interest in reading my comments.
Sincerely,

Gail Brinkmeier.

Comment of Susan Broadhead

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 2:45 p.m.

City, State: Barnardsville, NC

Occupation: Retired

Comment: As a consumer, I wish to have organic foods available to me. I believe there are many Americans who share this desire. We need a farm policy that supports and facilitates the production of organic food without putting needless roadblocks in the way.

It is also a source of good jobs for many young people.

Comment of Bonnie Brodersen

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 17, 2012, 8:39 p.m.

City, State: Ashland, OR

Occupation: Lawyer and Homemaker

Comment: Please endorse all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286) and fully fund the Organic Research and Extension Initiative (ORE) at the 2008 level. I grew up on a 160 acre working farm in Iowa and still own farm land. I have been eating

organically-grown food for over 15 years. I do so because I have seen the increase of cancer in farmers in my hometown. My mother, a farmer died of leukemia and her doctor said her leukemia was probably benzene-related. In the 1970's my parents started farming with herbicides and fertilizers containing benzene. Please help farmers and consumers by giving your full support to Organic farming. Thank you.

Comment of Kimberly Broerman

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:00 p.m.

City, State: Atlanta, GA

Occupation: Pastor/Teacher

Comment: Over the past few years, I have undertaken a serious exploration of where our food comes from, and have restructured our diet to try to eat as much local, seasonal, and organic food as possible. We are so grateful for the local farms and farmers market making great food available to us. I also teach a course called Mindful Eating to raise others' consciousness about our food choices. As a person of faith, I am really disturbed by the environmental, communal, social and health impacts of our current food system and want to support efforts to bring more clean, fair and sustainable food to more people. So I support these recommendations proposed by Slow Food USA, of which I am a proud member:

As the committee considers the 2012 Food and Farm Bill, I urge you to:

Support our fight against hunger by maintaining and strengthening critical nutrition programs in this time of unprecedented need. We must not solve our budget problems on the backs of those experiencing food insecurity, including our most vulnerable--our children, the elderly, and the disabled;

Provide an even "plowing" field by fully funding programs that support beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, organic farming, regional farm and food economies, and rural development. We need more farmers and ranchers, more sustainable food production, and more economic opportunity in our food system;

Support family farmers that really need help, not the biggest farms that don't: End subsidies (aka direct payments and countercyclical commodity programs), and replace them with loophole-free agriculture risk coverage. Additionally, implement a cap on crop insurance premium subsidies;

Ensure that limited conservation funding maximizes lasting environmental benefits: Limit funds to Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) for animal waste management infrastructure by eliminating the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Livestock Set-aside and protect the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) from disproportionate cuts, and improve it by ranking applications solely on their conservation benefits.

Comment of Dianne Bronkhorst

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:30 p.m.

City, State: Parkland, FL

Occupation: Stay-at-Home Mom

Comment: The U.S. food & agricultural policy must focus on adopting best agricultural practices that put the health of its citizens, the land & the livelihood of farmers & farm workers over the interests of industrial agriculture lobbyists.

We need funding to vital programs such as nutrition, conservation & support for organic & sustainable agriculture.

We need a better farm bill today & it's time for real reform.

Please support what I support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms & Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, & making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

No GMO's in our food supply.

Fair wages & health benefits to farmers & farm workers.

Thank you.

Comment of Indee Brooke

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:04 p.m.

City, State: Montrose, CA

Occupation: Secretary

Comment: It is vital that sustainable agriculture be supported and promoted as part of a responsible stewardship approach to present and future food production that protects and promotes eco-systems with many different species of plants and animals. The deeper and broader the species within any ecosystem, the more stable that ecosystem is and the more capable of responding to environmental stress. Current agribusiness practices tend toward plant crop monoculture and also result in runoff of fertilizers that cause imbalance in nearby waterways.

Comment of Robert Brooks

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 09, 2012, 8:29 p.m.

City, State: Hayward, CA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: I spent 13 years in the San Joaquin Valley. The small farmers desperately need help, but most of the help goes to huge commercial farming & they don't need or deserve it.

Comment of Serena Brooks

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:57 p.m.

City, State: Kings Park, NY

Occupation: Librarian

Comment: I think it is vital that we support organic farmers and farmers that humanely raise animals, as opposed to the factory farms and those farmers growing foods with harmful pesticides. Our very health and the health of our nation depend upon it. This is not only an animal rights issue, but a human rights issue, as mistreated animals that are pumped full of antibiotics and produce that is laden with pesticides are both extremely detrimental to the health of the humans eating them!

Comment of T.J. Brooks

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 6:45 a.m.

City, State: Seminole, FL

Occupation: Retired

Comment: There is a growing segment of the population that is retiring and seeking to live on small farms. These voters wish to be recognized as a distinctly separate type and size of agricultural producer.

Their customer base is one which seeks foodstuffs grown without chemicals. This segment of farmers need to be recognized and treated by law not as corporate farms but as the originators of agriculture once were in this country.

Comment of Claire Broome

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:47 p.m.

City, State: Berkeley, CA

Occupation: Public Health

Comment: The new farm bill is of central importance to the country--our farmers, consumers, economy, and environment. Please invest our tax dollars for the benefit of the whole country, not subsidizing foods that increase obesity, or providing welfare for wealthy agribusiness. Most importantly: any subsidies or insurance should have income limits so that they go to smaller units that really need them

Regarding specific provisions:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Comment of Louis Brouillet

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:25 a.m.

City, State: San Anselmo, CA

Occupation: Food Entrepreneur

Comment: Policies to help our nation become healthier are long overdue. How can our government support subsidies to food that makes us sick and let our health be in disarray?

The solution is simple, our government needs to stand for something and stop being the big AG and Food companies puppets.

Please help us live better lives by stopping the subsidies to corn and soy and funnel the money to real farmers.

Comment of James R. Broussard

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:06 p.m.

City, State: New Iberia, LA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Fruits, Nuts, Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Like in other areas of the economy, it is not healthy if we let the corporations become dictators in agriculture too.

Agribusiness is important but it is not to become the only game in town. If it does, we producers will become serfs far more enslaved than in the Middle Ages. Beware of Robber Barons!

Comment of Lisa Browdy

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:01 p.m.

City, State: Oak Park, IL

Occupation: Health Coach

Comment: Our country is suffering an obesity crisis. It is ridiculous that we subsidize corn, wheat, soy and CAFO meat (which is bad for us) rather than fresh produce and sustainably-raised meat, which is better for us and the environment! Please don't let the Agribusiness lobby make you do the wrong thing!

Comment of Ryan Brower

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 02, 2012, 9:12 a.m.

City, State: Cedar Run, NJ

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Fruits

Size: 50-150 acres

Comment: Small farms need to be preserved and not be required to meet the astronomical standards of large-scale farms. Small farms are the life blood of many communities around the world, and they should have their own set of standards and regulations.

Comment of Angela Brown

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 7:03 p.m.

City, State: N. Chesterfield, VA

Occupation: Retired Social Worker/Child Advocate/Caretaker for Elderly Relatives

Comment: Do your duty and give us real reform, not slashing organic studies and initiatives and food stamps while yet again subsidizing the big interests.

I have been a food stamp worker and seen truly hungry children in this country like you likely never have. Meanwhile I try hard to safeguard the food supply for future generations while big interests undermine our health and small business interests at every turn. Please understand that there is a huge market out here for clean practices and clean unchemicalized food. Please understand that when you sell out to big interests you are selling out the future of America as a free land. Is this what you want for your descendants and for America? If I have to buy food from Costa Rica to know it is organic than I will, but what a shame. I used to buy American when possible, but you are making it increasingly difficult to feel good about that. I do not want to support big interests like Monsanto and huge farms when there are still family farms in my state. My grandmother grew strawberries and my father in law raised a small number of cows when he retired so my heart is with the small farmers. Just today I was in Costco buying apples and noticed that they came from several states away when we have apple orchards right here in my state. I did not see a single item that was

grown in my state. When I asked they said that they were likely cheaper elsewhere, but there is still a cost from the pollution that came with transporting it here and the extreme packaging that the apples came in that I see my neighbors bring home and that presumably will go into the landfills or use energy even if recycled. But big interests can do such eye candy. Doesn't make it right, though. Fresh and closer by would be better. And organic. Not big interests. Check out Costa Rica where the whole country is organic. You can see the difference in their produce and probably in medical costs . . .

Comment of Bonnie Brown

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:34 p.m.

City, State: Lynn, MA

Occupation: Unemployed

Comment: The farm bill should be about Food, the food that Americans eat--or should eat--every day, not about commodities and profits for large corporations. Please make the farm bill focus on healthy, local food for all Americans.

Comment of Cameron Brown

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 9:21 a.m.

City, State: Thiells, NY

Occupation: Musician, Composer and Music Teacher

Comment: We must wake up and understand that we need an agricultural policy that focuses on organic food and sustainability--the long-term health of the land, people and animals. The big corporations are being allowed to use us as guinea pigs in their voracious hunt for profits. We have no idea about the long-term consequences of all this genetic tinkering. We need to focus on totally natural methods of food production. The health of the planet, it's people and it's farm land are not a good subject for capitalistic exploitation. Shouldn't that be pretty obvious!

Comment of Carl Brown

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 03, 2012, 8:10 p.m.

City, State: Griggsville, IL

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Field Crops

Size: 301-500 acres

Comment: Have AIP/RMA protect only the 60% to 85% of the crop x% paid for with farmer premiums.

Have FSA/Government protect 0% to 60% of the crop x% paid for with Direct Payment money instead of paying it directly to the farmer.

Direct Payments are killing the small farmer.

Comment of Carol Brown

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:39 p.m.

City, State: Columbia, MO

Occupation: Mother, Seamstress, and Small Business Owner

Comment: I am very concerned about the short term and long term effects that the farm bill has on the types of food, and the prices of food available to consumers in our country.

I am disheartened that farm bills in the past have subsidized unsustainable farming practices, and the production of terribly unhealthy food.

I would like our farm bill to subsidize smaller farms, sustainable organic agriculture, and farms that produce food that can be eaten directly rather than crops that are highly refined into unhealthy products (like high fructose corn syrup for example).

It is obscene to be supporting the production of products like high fructose corn syrup with our tax subsidies.

The farm bill can work to support farmers who grow fruits and vegetables.

The farm bill can support local farmers' markets.

The farm bill can subsidize the use of food stamps at these farmer's markets, as is the case at one of the many farmers' markets in my town, making locally grown organic produce affordable to even the poorest of my neighbors.

The way I see it, the current farm bill subsidizes giant agricultural companies. It subsidizes the production of products that become fast food hamburgers and chicken nuggets. It subsidizes the crops that are grown to be processed into high fructose corn syrup. It subsidizes unhealthy food production, unhealthy farm practices, unsustainable food production method. We know all of this. The average American knows all this. The average member of Congress knows all this. All of us know that it could be different. It all starts with the farm

bill. We are all watching to see what you all come up with.

Comment of Cynthia M. Brown

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 2:12 p.m.

City, State: San Diego, CA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: The Best United States agricultural practices, put the health of our citizens, the land and the livelihood of farmers and farm workers over the interests of lobbyists for industry! And, many of our politicians do not have the same morals and values as the majority of the American people! They are in it for power and money. And corporate greed feeds on that! It is destroying the American way of life.

We need to change all of that, now!

American farmers and food consumers will benefit from a fair and healthy farm bill.

Some of the ideas that have been presented are completely out of touch and incomprehensible: including cutting funding to vital programs such as nutrition, conservation and support for organic and sustainable agriculture. What the hell is that all about . . . really!

The American farm bill needs to be created in the right way!

My family and I are against Monsanto and the like; and what they have been doing to our environment here and around the world. We want real food . . . not GMO poisons.

We want family farmers to be able to grow healthy food, in healthy soil, have a good livelihood, in peace, working for themselves and for the American people, and not be hounded by corporate bastards.

And we want our food labeled too.

Get it done the right way!

Comment of Gary Brown

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:41 p.m.

City, State: Honolulu, HI

Occupation: Retired

Comment: I demand that all foods intended for human consumption be properly labeled for organic and GMO content. I have a right to know and choose what I put into my own body.

Comment of Heather Brown

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:14 p.m.

City, State: Brooklyn, NY

Occupation: Chef

Comment: I am writing you to urge your support for the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286), and Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236). I would also urge you to support retaining the full funding of the Conservation Stewardship program and maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

It is important to keep good things in place while making improvements to fix the broken food system in this country.

As the granddaughter of Iowa dairy farmers I am deeply saddened by the loss of family farming, but incredibly hopeful and encouraged by the new movements afoot to reinvigorate agriculture in this country.

You are such an amazing Congresswoman. I am so honored to have you as my representative. Thank you for your service!

Heather.

Comment of Inga Brown

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 10:20 a.m.

City, State: Layton, UT

Occupation: Holistic Plant Based Nutritionist

Comment: Dear members of congress,

I would greatly appreciate your consideration of these issues facing organic farmers. It is critical to the lives and health of people in this country to have access to organic produce that has not been compromised with GMO products. The strong hold that big agriculture has on the farming industry is devastating to the livelihood of the organic farmer and also to the health of everyone who consumes GMO products. In this country, we should have a choice and opportunity to consume the kind of produce and meats we choose. I already pay higher prices for organic produce and organic meats, so please don't devastate this small industry any further. Even in Europe, they have rejected the GMO by Monsanto and realize that these GMO products are not good for us. If you so choose to maintain the big agriculture, you are ultimately affecting people's health. At the very least, please give the organic farmer's the freedom to farm and provide

natural produce that has not been adulterated by genetically modified seeds and sprayed with herbicides and pesticides that are toxic. We the consumers have a right to have organic foods and not have the government determine what we can eat. It angers me to think that decisions are made in congress that only affect the money and control the government has on the farmers rather than considering what is best for the health of people in this country. This shouldn't be about money and excess production, but should be about the health of individuals, the health of animals and the purity of the produce grown. Please allow us the freedom of choice. The last I checked, these are the principals this country was founded upon.

Sincerely,

Inga Brown.

Comment of Jami Brown

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:47 p.m.

City, State: Chattanooga, TN

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Please don't cut funding for small farmers. Corporate Agriculture Industries don't need government subsidies. Small time farmers do! Remember who you work for as representatives of all Americans not Corporations!

Comment of Jennifer Brown

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 10:36 a.m.

City, State: Denton, TX

Occupation: Mother and Medical Assistant

Comment: I want to be able to feed my daughter the same quality of foods I grew up on. I lived near a farm growing up and always had fresh, organic produce. I grew up healthy. I am rarely sick and have never had any serious medical problems. I now purchase organic produce for my family and find it difficult to find all the organics that I would like to be providing. On occasion I go with the regular produce, but with GMO's being put out without any labeling whatsoever, I will not be able to supplement the lack of organics with something that is produced to be it's own toxin. It was bad enough that I felt guilty using produce that was treated with toxins, hoping that "this one time" won't do too much harm. I just want to be able to confidently feed my little girl and know there is no way what I am giving her will ever harm her. Ever. It is outrageous that there are so few regulations to protect us in regard to foods that could very well be a cause in serious illnesses.

Comment of Kimberly Brown

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 8:07 a.m.

City, State: Bedford, NH

Occupation: Stay-at-Home Mom

Comment: Every time I go to the grocery store, I fear for the health of my children. I try to buy organic, but it's very expensive. Other countries in Europe and even China are outlawing industrial food practices that we still allow. But we should be the lead country in controlling our food supply and we're far from it! Please stop letting industries control our food supply. Our government may be protecting us from terrorist in Afghanistan, but they are not protecting us from the terrorist who control our food supply all in the name of the might dollar. Thank you for your time and efforts concerning the health of Americans.

Comment of Nicole Brown

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:26 p.m.

City, State: Camas, WA

Occupation: Production Lead Operator

Comment: We as a nation need to continue sport to good clean healthy food! Please continue support for small local farmers. We need to cut our ties with big ag and corrupt businesses like Monsanto, Libby, Dow. Our environment and children depend on us to make the right choices for their protection. Please make the right choice.

Comment of Roderick Brown

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:48 p.m.

City, State: San Diego, CA

Comment: America deserves clean, fresh, organic food and drink as

does our farm stock pets and wildlife, (fish, fowl and animals). Please remember, do only that which serves the people.

Thank You.

Comment of Sheila Brown

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:10 p.m.

City, State: Vashon, WA

Occupation: Gardener

Comment: Time now for real reform, not slashing benefits to the poor. My son is seriously mentally disabled and really need every dollar of his food stamps and DSI check. Thanks for caring for the least of us. Sheila Brown

Comment of Theresa Brown

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 8:39 p.m.

City, State: Johns Creek, GA

Occupation: Real Estate Agent

Comment: I would along with millions of others would like to see a fair organic farm bill. We would like for congress to work for the people and not for Big Agriculture. We have the right to eat healthy food and we must protect the planet in order to do so. It should not always be about how much money some cooperation can make and how much the stockholder earning will increase. It's about the health of the planet and the health of the people on it. So please do the Right thing and pass an organic farm bill.

Thank you,

Theresa Brown.

Comment of Victoria Brown

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 02, 2012, 10:49 a.m.

City, State: McAllen, TX

Occupation: Student

Comment: More members of House of Representatives representing more farms within their districts without becoming inefficient and impersonal

encourage a younger generation of farmers who received a higher education

make the information and details about the farm bill more accessible and understandable to the public

reevaluate the criteria for food stamps, so it promotes purchasing food from farmer's markets

Comment of R.J. Browne

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 09, 2012, 4:36 p.m.

City, State: Weed, CA

Occupation: College Instructor

Comment: No one should suffer from hunger. It is within our means to provide food for everyone--our nation is blessed for its abundance and prosperity and humanity. Good nutrition is crucial, most importantly organic foods; these must be protected and expanded and should take precedence over agribusiness's nonorganic crops. Organic foods should be and must be the only kind of crops grown.

Comment of Timothy Browne

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:07 p.m.

City, State: Atlanta, GA

Occupation: Sales of Produce

Comment: Let's raise the bar. Europe is already leading the way in emissions and clean air acts. They also have much better farming practices. Organic farming is a wonderful thing for everyone. With the exception of some corporate interests that have ruin the god given duty to grow one's own food naturally and fruitfully. Organic farming is farming the way that god intended plants to be grown. These men and women in Washington banned stem cell research but sit idly by whilst corporate scientists mix human genes into rice crops. At least stem cell research saves lives. Please help raise the bar and set organic farming as the standard all in the land should meet. Thank you.

Comment of Brenda Browning

Date Submitted: Tuesday, March 20, 2012, 9:49 a.m.

City, State: Lubbock, TX

Occupation: Retired Blue Collar

Comment: As we do live in the country and appreciate the CRP grass keeping the dirt down, I wonder why farmers cannot do their own planting at their own expense rather than have the tax payers pay for that as well as subsidies on their crops. I feel we need to really stop some of the programs. Would love to assist them, but times are too tough to help everyone. We also need to stop foreign aid to other countries until we can get our country back on track, that includes Afghanistan. Thanks for the opportunity to voice my opinion.

Comment of Lori Brown-Patrick

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:03 a.m.

City, State: Lanesville, IN

Occupation: Editor, Writer

Comment: Food needs to be close, clean, and sustainable. We need more (and smaller) farms, scattered among us, everywhere people live--neighborhood food producers who can survive by what they do and help their neighbors to do the same by the fruits of their labor. We need more farmers, even if we have to give them land to begin on, insisting that they use sustainable farming methods and trade honorably with their neighbors--and their neighbors must be encouraged to support them. We need a new vision of food and farming in this country--one that respects the Earth, the people who work it, and the sacred nature of the contract between the three: Earth, farmer, and consumer. Please make sure any farm legislation makes room for humane, small, sustainable, local farms and elevates food production to the honorable calling it once was and must be again.

As the committee considers the 2012 Food and Farm Bill, I urge you to:

Support our fight against hunger by maintaining and strengthening critical nutrition programs in this time of unprecedented need. We must not solve our budget problems on the backs of those experiencing food insecurity, including our most vulnerable--our children, the elderly, and the disabled;

Provide an even "plowing" field by fully funding programs that support beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, organic farming, regional farm and food economies, and rural development. We need more farmers and ranchers, more sustainable food production, and more economic opportunity in our food system;

Support family farmers that really need help, not the biggest farms that don't: End subsidies (aka direct payments and countercyclical commodity programs), and replace them with loophole-free agriculture risk coverage. Additionally, implement a cap on crop insurance premium subsidies;

Ensure that limited conservation funding maximizes lasting environmental benefits: Limit funds to Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) for animal waste management infrastructure by eliminating the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Livestock Set-aside and protect the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) from disproportionate cuts, and improve it by ranking applications solely on their conservation benefits

Comment of Patricia Bruinsma

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:46 p.m.

City, State: Williamsburg, VA

Occupation: Accountant

Comment: Please don't let Congress cut \$4 million from organic research funding and cut in half funding to support Beginning Farmers. Tell Congress to support organics. Our physical health, as well as the health of the world as a whole, depends on your diligence in this matter. We must stop polluting our bodies, and our Earth, with toxins. We need organic funding today and always.

Thank you for your time,

Patricia Bruinsma.

Comment of Christina Bruns

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:26 p.m.

City, State: Dallas, PA

Occupation: Retired Public and Catholic School Teacher

Comment: I believe that America can produce healthy food for our people. I do not want factory food produced for my children and grandchildren. Research proves what is healthy and we should follow their lead for wholesome food not food for profit. My entire family is vegetarian because of our belief it is best for health and for the environment and we can feed the world on a vegetarian diet. Why must industry dictate health, industry and corporations are not people, people are people. Our laws should reflect what is best for us and future generations.

Comment of Eric Bruynseels

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 5:06 p.m.

City, State: River Forest, IL

Occupation: Student

Comment: Please, do not cut SNAP. Cutting SNAP will mean even less food for hungry people already in poverty--think of the children.

Comment of Leo Bruynseels

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 5:41 p.m.

City, State: River Forest, IL

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Please do not cut SNAP. Cutting SNAP will result in even less food being available to single people and families who are already poor and hungry. Think of the children: it will be even more difficult for them to concentrate on their school work if, on top of everything else they experience, they go hungry! We are a rich country and we can afford it. We waste huge amounts on other things. Prioritize!

Comment of Louise Bruynseels

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 5:22 p.m.

City, State: River Forest, IL

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Please, do not cut SNAP. Every month I serve hungry people at our food pantry. Cutting SNAP will mean even more people will go hungry--please think of the children.

Comment of Alex Bryan

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 10:06 p.m.

City, State: Lansing, MI

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Dear Chairman Lucas,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture on the next farm bill. My district representative is being copied on this testimony. I am a young farmer and I'd like to share my support for programs that help the next generation of growers build strong farm businesses. As it's estimated that 125,000 farmers will retire in the next 5 years, it's absolutely critical that farm bill programs help citizens get started in this challenging field. I ask that the Committee endorse all of the provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236), including:

Mandatory funding for Individual Development Accounts at \$5 million per year. This program helps new farmers raise capital to start farm businesses and is tested and proven by organizations like Practical Farmers of Iowa and the California Farmlink.

Mandatory funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program at \$25 million a year. This program funds essential education for new farmers around the country.

Authorize a new microloan program, to enable young and beginning farmers to better access FSA loan programs.

Revise FSA rules to make loan programs more accessible to more young and beginning farmers.

Reaffirm the existing cost share differential for BFRs within EQIP. Also, reaffirm the advance payment option allowing beginning and socially disadvantaged producers to receive an advance payment for the project's costs for purchasing materials or contracting services, but increase the limit on

the advance payment from 30 percent to 50 percent of costs.

Amend the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP) to make farm viability part of the purpose of the program and to give discretionary authority to the eligible entities that implement the program to give priority to easements with an option to purchase at the agricultural use value, deals that transfer the land to beginning and farmers and ranchers, applicants with farm succession plans, and other similar mechanisms to maintain the affordability of protected land.

These and other provisions within the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act will help new growers succeed and I urge you to include them in the next farm bill. Owning a business in the state of Michigan is important to me. It is especially important to follow in the footsteps of my grandfather, an apple grower of Mid-Michigan. Without support to level the playing field for beginning farmers like myself, I will struggle and likely fail. For a state with such a large reliance on agriculture, this is not acceptable. I would very much appreciate any and all support you can give to make sure these important programs remain funded.

Sincerely,

Alex Bryan.

Comment of Marjory Bryan

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 16, 2012, 2:32 a.m.

City, State: Portland, OR

Occupation: Marketing

Comment: I am a single (and only) parent living without family.

I use food stamps and hate that I have to but without it my 5 yr. old & I would be very very very very hungry and although I've never asked for public support be . . . I'd be forced to ask for cash benefits for food, should SNAP be altered or diminished.

Comment of MaryAnn Bryan

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:29 p.m.

City, State: Prescott, AZ

Occupation: Homemaker

Comment: We need full and honest representation that reflects our concerns about health and food safety and labeling of our food to reflect what is in it, especially GMO's.

I already wrote to Rep. Gosar about this and got a reply that totally supports keeping the GMO's hidden. I feel that we are not being listened to.

With dismay,

MaryAnn Bryan.

Comment of Brit Bryant

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 8:44 p.m.

City, State: Portland, OR

Occupation: Grocery Store Manager

Comment: Please prioritize local, natural, organic whole foods produced by small farmers. We have an amazing opportunity to affect the health of a generation by making responsible choices in what we prioritize.

Comment of Ellen Bryant

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 8:19 p.m.

City, State: Eureka, CA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: The farm bill must be written for farmers that are interested in keeping the land, food and people of America healthy. Mega-Corp(se)phood is for profit and it's up to you to stop their destruction for profit assaults on U.S.(A).

Comment of Emily Bryant

Date Submitted: Monday, May 14, 2012, 3:04 p.m.

City, State: Indianapolis, IN

Occupation: Executive Director, Feeding Indiana's Hungry, Inc.

Comment: As the number of families struggling to make ends meet increased significantly during the recession, Indian's food insecure population now includes more than one million Hoosiers. Even as unemployment remains near 9 percent and food banks continue to be

pressed to meet need in their communities, we have experienced significant declines in Federal commodity purchases and charitable donations.

In partnership with more than 1,700 local agencies, 62% of which are faith-based, our food banks are now feeding roughly 700,000 Hoosiers a year. We could not meet current need without support from Federal nutrition programs like TEFAP and CSFP, nor could we meet added demand if other Federal nutrition programs like SNAP were weakened or charitable giving tax deductions were limited.

As Congress addresses the farm bill, Feeding Indiana's Hungry urges legislators to safeguard nutrition assistance and other safety net programs.

TEFAP Food Commodities accounted for 24% of the food moving through the member food banks of Feeding Indiana's Hungry in 2011, including mandatory commodities required by the farm bill and bonus commodity purchases made by USDA either to satisfy farm bill specialty-crop purchase requirements or in response to market conditions. TEFAP commodity support dropped by nearly 30% (\$173 million) in FY2011 due to strong agricultural markets, and rising gas prices weakened the impact of TEFAP distribution funding.

We urge you to in the 2012 Farm Bill to make TEFAP commodities more responsive to changes in need by tying mandatory funding to unemployment levels and clarify the Agriculture Secretary's authority to purchase bonus commodities in response to high need as well as low commodity prices. We also urge you to reauthorize TEFAP Storage and Distribution Funds at \$100 million per year and TEFAP Infrastructure Grants at \$15 million per year.

We ask that the 2012 Farm Bill transition CSFP to a seniors-only program by phasing out eligibility of women, infants, and children while grandfathering in current participants to promote greater efficiencies and recognize CSFP's evolution to serving a primarily senior population.

We finally ask that the farm bill maintain SNAP funding to support current eligibility and benefit levels and oppose harmful policy changes.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Weikert Bryant, Executive Director, Feeding Indiana's Hungry, Inc., Indiana's state association of Feeding America affiliated food banks

Comment of Russell Bryant

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:06 p.m.

City, State: Omaha, NE

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Dairy

Size: 50-150 acres

Comment: Organic is important to maintain health of this country with less food . . . I have proved that on our Dairy herd. We have had first place quality milk in Nebraska for 6 years. It takes top quality live soil to produce top quality food for healthy people. This will help our budget by cutting medical costs.

Comment of Bedzaida Bryen

Date Submitted: Tuesday, May 08, 2012, 8:57 a.m.

City, State: Ft. Myers, FL

Occupation: Volunteer Manager

Comment: Food banks struggles daily to meet the growing need for food in our communities. One of the most impressive facts about Food Banks is that they do not work in autonomy, but congruent with government and other nongovernmental organizations to ensure that no one adult, child or aging go to bed hungry.

We should not consider a weak, to no safety net, it would be catastrophic. We need a strong farm bill to safeguard that struggling families do not plunge further into despair, but can at minimal put food on the table.

I ask that you pass a farm bill that protects and strengthens programs like SNAP, TEFAP, and CSFP. Our community cannot afford cuts to these programs.

Comment of Helen Bryenton

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:50 a.m.

City, State: Knoxville, TN

Occupation: Violinist

Comment: I want to KNOW that the food in my grocery store is safe and healthy. An increase in the cost of safe food offsets the costs of ill health from low quality and less healthy foods.

Comment of Betty Buchanan

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 13, 2012, 2:45 a.m.

City, State: Bakersfield, CA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Less or no subsidies for big corporate farms and ranches, lots more subsidies for independently owned ones. Get GMO products labeled or better yet put a stop to them!

Comment of Wade Buchanan

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:51 p.m.

City, State: Colorado Springs, CO

Occupation: Unix Systems Administrator

Comment: I understand the need to reign in budgets and the crazy spending, but some things do require investment and support. I support the following things and ask that you do as well:

1. The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).
2. Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.
3. The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).
4. Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

It is time to start cutting large farm subsidies for crops that are over produced, and have largely lead to the obesity epidemic in our country and start making investments where it counts. We all hear the lamenting of the vanishing small farmer and local economies so here is your opportunity to do something to reverse that trend.

Thank you for your time and support.

Comment of Cathy Buck

Date Submitted: Thursday, April 19, 2012, 10:12 a.m.

City, State: Pittsburgh, PA

Occupation: Client Associate

Comment: Never in a million years did I ever think I would need help feeding my family. When my husband, a successful self-employed contractor, suddenly had no work due to the economy and my income was just enough to keep the bill collectors at bay, food was something that became pretty scarce--and with two children (ages 10, 5) that's not something you can skimp on. So we applied, and thankfully, were approved for food stamps. Now food is not a problem.

Being self-employed you get nothing if you are out of work--those are the people that need the help. Please continue to feed families. Thank you.

Comment of Sherman Buck

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:01 p.m.

City, State: Seattle, WA

Occupation: Harborview Medical Center--Patient Services Specialist

Comment: U.S. food and agricultural policy must focus on adopting best agricultural practices that put the health of its citizens, the land and the livelihood of farmers and farm workers over the interests of industrial agriculture lobbyists. To not do so is to continue the same insanity rooted in greed and market monopolies.

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Cutting funding to vital programs such as nutrition, conservation and support for organic and sustainable agriculture.

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

The House Ag Committee has already voted to slash \$33 billion from the food stamp program while leaving farm subsidies unscathed. Creating a \$33 billion new entitlement program that guarantees the income of profitable farm businesses on top of \$90 billion in subsidies for crop and revenue insurance policies is hypocritical at best, and at its worst subsidizes those agribusinesses that don't need yet more subsidizing.

Ironically, the Senate Ag Committee has already voted to cut \$4 million from organic research funding and cut funding to support Beginning Farmers in half. The lack of support in these key areas is indicative of those on the committee who continue to support corporate agribusiness agendas vested maintaining a monopoly on markets. To continue ignoring this problem is to continue legitimizing dysfunctional practices that benefit the few, while continuing destructive practices for the environment and escalating health and wellness issues with those who continue to consume foods that are less than adequate for consumption. Putting the fox in charge of the hen house is similar to corporate interests in charge of the House Agricultural Committee.

The Senate Ag Committee has also voted to get rid of wasteful subsidy payments. It has proposed to replace it with a new subsidized insurance program that leading sustainable agriculture advocates are calling rife with opportunities for fraud and abuse.

While Congress is looking to get rid of direct payments to commodity farmers, the subsidized insurance program it proposes to replace it with will allow giant commodity farmers and insurance companies to walk away with billions in taxpayer dollars while putting the land, soil and environment at greater risk. According to the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition's Ferd Hoefner, "failing to place limitations on crop insurance subsidies and to re-attach soil erosion and wetland conservation requirements to crop insurance programs, the Committee has failed to do the full reform that is needed."

This sort of nonsense of eliminating wasteful subsidies in favor of another form of wasteful subsidies is nothing new in the corporate politically run government. I'm strongly suggesting that those on the committee begin to assess their level of honesty and integrity on how they perform their responsibilities to U.S. citizens as a whole, rather than maintaining a closed door policy in maintaining a system that is completely worthless except to those in the corporate sectors who continue to gain and maintain dominance in markets as well as in the creation of continued farming bills that exclude much needed reform in practices and oversight. These committees continue to be a mockery of the democratic process.

One might as well call it the corporate process these days.

Comment of Alexis Buckley

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:17 p.m.

City, State: Boston, MA

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: Representative Capuano,

Just a quick note to let you know that I would appreciate your supporting small and family farmers. Subsidizing corporate farms has made "food" more affordable, but it's also encouraged incredibly unhealthy practices that people ended paying for in the end with their health (obesity, cancer, developmental issues). These are well researched and well documented consequences of corporate greed. While at first glance supporting small, local farmers (and even urban farmers) may seem a costly shift, but--again--we pay for it in the end either way. why not go for the healthier option that can also generate more creative and sustainable jobs?

Thanks for your time & consideration.

Comment of Paula Buckner

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 1:31 p.m.

City, State: Eugene, OR

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Cutting funds for farms is like shooting ourselves in the foot. Reform now, not later! Our government mouths the words of promoting physical health, organic farming, yet politicians act in ways that undermine the very support structure that leads to the actuality of better collective health. "No Hunger Allowed" should be our motto. Elevating our food supply standards and maintaining them is a sign of progress and a wise investment.

Comment of Beth Buczynski

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:12 p.m.

City, State: Cheyenne, WY

Occupation: Freelance Writer

Comment: Farmers and eaters across the U.S. benefit from a fair and healthy farm bill. Yet politicians like yourself are so out of touch with the values of the American people, you have allowed corporate agribusiness to exert a stranglehold on our regulatory system. As my supposed representative in the House, please know that I support: The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286);

Full funding of conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs;

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236); and Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative. You were not elected to do what you and your corporate sponsors think is best for Wyoming. You were elected to do what the people want for Wyoming. Please do your job.

Comment of Susan Budde

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:28 p.m.

City, State: Manchester, CT

Comment: Don't let Congress cut \$4 million from organic research funding and cut in half funding to support Beginning Farmers. Tell Congress to support organics.

Thank you!

Comment of Jennifer Buford

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:37 a.m.

City, State: Fort Wayne, IN

Occupation: Marriage and Family Therapist

Comment: Considering the recent controversy over pink slime in our beef, I feel it's more important than ever that local farmers be better subsidized, and better assisted by our government in their efforts to produce safe and desirable meats for human consumption. I find it greatly offensive that our government allow the same standards and practices to human nutrition as they would our dogs and cats. It is this type of decision making that makes the American people ever leery and mistrustful of its own government. It is time to stop secrets in food practice if the American taxpayers are funding a department to oversee food production on our behalf, otherwise what is the point? I feel the only way these issues can effectively be addressed is to help local farmers who focus on quality food rather than saving nickels and dimes.

Respectfully Yours,

J. Buford.

Comment of Elise Buhn

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 7:01 p.m.

City, State: Santa Rosa, CA

Occupation: Landscape Architect

Comment: Please repeal unneeded subsidies for the mega producers of our food! It is profoundly unsafe to allow a small number of producers to determine our food supply. We must subsidize the beginning farmer, the organic farmer, the small farms and the families who have hung onto their heritage of farming through some really tough times. If you look at the origins of our presidents, a majority of them grew up on farms. It should be a proud occupation, not an unrewarded and despised occupation. Please help us all change the direction we have been gaining since the days of Earl Butz.

Comment of Rita Buhr

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 5:03 a.m.

City, State: Graham, WA

Occupation: School Assistant

Comment: It's unthinkable what has happened to our main food supply with the chemicals the GMO foods etc. that we're forced to eat unless we can get organic. Our kids can't even think straight anymore! All kinds of mental health, physical and behavioral problems much due to the worthless foods fed to our kids! They'd be better off eating grass! To subsidize farmers to grow these toxic foods and not give organic farmers decent funding so ``we the people" (that includes you too!)

can have better choices, is basically criminal. Tax payers have the right to eat decent food! How does the government expect to have a good taxpaying workforce with such unhealthy food? Or is it really ok to just let us become more unhealthy so we have to rely on pharmaceuticals to perform at all. Then that helps your buddies have more profits too.

We get it!

Please, do the right thing!

Comment of Michael Bulger

Date Submitted: Friday, May 11, 2012, 6:37 p.m.

City, State: Astoria, NY

Occupation: Student/CSA

Comment: Thank you for taking the time to read my comments.

My hope is that the farm bill will direct help to those who need it most. By this I mean curtailing benefits to wealthy farmers in favor of supporting small and lower-income farmers. I also mean maintaining nutrition programs that provide not only enough calories, but also healthy foods.

An overwhelming amount of research tells us that Americans need to increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables. The farm bill should reflect this goal. The days of farm bills whose main benefactors are feed grains, livestock producers, and junk food, must come to a close.

It's time to support real, healthy nutrition and rural Americans who need it most.

Thank you.

Comment of Jennifer Bulleit

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:13 a.m.

City, State: Verona, WI

Occupation: Nurse

Comment: We are subsidizing meat, corn and soy factory farming. In these times of limited budgets, let's subsidize the workers, family farm operators, not farming corporations and subcontractors. When we protect the vegetable and fruit growers I will know this nation cares about its people.

Comment of Lindsay Bullock

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:33 p.m.

City, State: Olympia, WA

Occupation: Waitress

Comment: We need back our farmers to produce good healthy food and crops! We need to get back to our old ways of doing what is best for our land and vegetation! Independent Farmers are at our best interest and large money hungry company are Not! It is a shame that the U.S. has become with all of these corporate companies changing our Earth! In the end no one should be on top and everyone should be together!

Comment of Jane Bultedaob

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:18 p.m.

City, State: Sequim, WA

Occupation: Homemaker

Comment: One day I will have grandchildren, and I want them to have the good food that is available if we give our farmers, and not big business, our support. We need to put People before Profit!

Comment of Penny Bulten

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 11:54 a.m.

City, State: Boynton Beach, FL

Occupation: Parent

Comment: GMO food should be labeled, Big agribusiness should not be able to use regulations to shove out their smaller competitors, and farmers should not have to go through miles of red tape to reach their customers.

Comment of Suzanne Bunker

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 3:39 a.m.

City, State: Eugene, OR

Occupation: Educator: College

Comment: Although I may not appear to be someone who has close ties with agriculture, I spent many years working as a fruit picker, vegetable packer and farm truck driver when I was much younger. In those days, questionable practices were closely scrutinized by local producers, communities, and buyers. Since the advent of agribusiness

and factory farms, one can easily fear eating since questionable farming practices abound! I urge you to take the steps needed to ensure that your fellow citizens are protected from dangerous agricultural practices, and empower us with a future of safe, untainted food sources!

Comment of Laurel Bunkers

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 10, 2012, 10:23 p.m.

City, State: Oak Park, IL

Occupation: Executive Assistant

Comment: Please don't cut SNAP benefits. I volunteer one Saturday every month at my local food pantry, and the need is Not decreasing. Families tell us that the pantry, combined with the little help they receive from SNAP helps them be able to keep a roof over their families' heads. Without it, many will be sent over the brink. Please, don't take this away from them.

Comment of Jim Burbridge

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 4:04 a.m.

City, State: East Greenwich, RI

Occupation: Contractor

Comment: The current Monsanto/corporate based FDA is counterproductive to health and happiness, thus un-American. Sustainable farming is the wave of the future.

Comment of Melinda Burd

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:07 p.m.

City, State: Deerfield Beach, FL

Occupation: Manager

Comment: Please, do not cut any funding for organic research or cut any funding to support beginning farmers. Please, support organic farming by increasing funding for research and reducing government subsidies for conventional farms.

Comment of Henry Burden

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 7:55 p.m.

City, State: Havre de Grace, MD

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Until the nation's businesses can be persuaded to pay a full day's living wage to anyone who works a full day, a humane nation must provide the assistance that assures availability of necessary nourishment to all its citizens.

Comment of Susan Burden

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 6:23 p.m.

City, State: Eureka Springs, AR

Occupation: Handmade Garment Manufacturing

Comment: It is imperative that all the people on Earth eat food that is natural to the Earth's cycles of nature. The Earth does not belong to us, we belong to it, and we have no business altering food to suit agribusiness practices, especially since their practices are known to cause illnesses. Furthermore, agribusiness practices further deteriorate all other life forms and pollute drinking water. We must do all we can to protect water, food, and air because it is those three elements that give life to all. We are only hurting ourselves and others by eating, drinking and breathing poisons, chemicals, genetically altered seeds and animals. Supporting farmers who grow by using natural methods will be a huge step in Health Care Reform. If you care about the health of anything or anyone then you must get informed and more concerned and careful about what we eat, drink and breathe. Support the farmers who grow organically and the ones who do not pollute and poison and unnecessarily and foolishly alter nature.

Susan Burden.

Comment of Janis Burger

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 1:27 a.m.

City, State: Port Angeles, WA

Occupation: Park Ranger--Subsistence Gardener

Comment: I've been trying to grow my own produce and support local farmers to help get healthy, local food to our community, cutting fuel for long-distance transport, support local jobs, preserve open space. This is a much more sustainable paradigm than CAFOs and agribusiness and subsidies for commodities that often aren't very good for us

anyway. I hope you'll support the provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286), as well as funding for conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236) is important for sustainability and local jobs. And as more of us strive to consume healthier food (for us and the land) it's important that we maintain the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Comment of Ben Burgess

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 10, 2012, 11:39 a.m.

City, State: Atlanta, GA

Occupation: Food Bank Procurement Coordinator

Comment: Please, Do Not cut the Food Stamps program. Too many people need right now! I see it every day. These aren't people gaming the system . . . they are people that just need help getting back on their feet.

Comment of Sharron Burgess

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 11:54 p.m.

City, State: Rileyville, VA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: I'm in charge of a new volunteer group called Sustainable Shenandoah. Our garden is organic but not certified. Our growing standards are higher than what is classified by the government as acceptable.

As a group, we have undertaken intensive studies of the present agriculture in this country. I am personally appalled by the condition; food recalls for contamination by major food companies, small farmers unable to compete with major agri-corp, complex legislation that favors the major agri-corp, the increased rate of diabetes, hypertension, cardiac disease and obesity especially the increase in younger and younger people.

Enough nice talk--in a nut shell--the major agri-corps are only interested in their bottom line, not the welfare of their customers. Farmers are losing their farms, the general public is getting cheap foods that lack the proper amount of nutrients found in organic foods and why--because healthy food would decrease their profits that are based on using chemicals.

I often wonder what the corporate heads of the mega-agri-corps eat and how healthy they are and how much they spend on medical care for themselves and perhaps their families.

Comment of Peter Burkard

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:31 a.m.

City, State: Sarasota, FL

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Fruits, Greenhouse/nursery, Poultry/poultry products, Specialty Crops, Vegetables, Other

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Stop subsidizing agribusiness and producers of commodity crops. We are so unhealthy as a nation partly due to the ag subsidy system. If you are going to subsidize anybody, make it the producers of healthy products like fruits and vegetables and small organic farmers. (Note: While this is what I am, I'm not interested in any subsidies for myself.)

Comment of Frances Burke

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:37 p.m.

City, State: Davis, CA

Occupation: Retired Farmer and Small Business Owner

Comment: Simple changes in the farm bill could improve the health of Americans and improve the economy by spreading the funds to real people doing local business and helping on a more grass roots level. Feeding all taxpayer money to ADM and other Huge corporations is doing real working people harm. Cheap fast food and ethanol is costing us not helping us.

Comment of Moira Burke

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:49 p.m.

City, State: Dixon, CA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Forestry, Livestock, Other

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Stop subsidies to large commodity ag (ADM etc.); focus on helping new farmers buy land via ag conservation easements. Second, provide user friendly help for smaller farmers, not hurdles designed for larger, well funded producers. My farm is >50, forest is 471 acres.

Comment of David Burley

Date Submitted: Friday, May 11, 2012, 11:00 a.m.

City, State: Hammond, LA

Occupation: Professor

Comment: Hello,

Please give the nation a farm bill that will put more people into work growing our food and one that supports farmers that grow a diverse amount of food sustainably. We should be encouraging and rewarding farmers who grow food and livestock that does not pollute the air, water, land and our bodies but nourishes us without chemicals. We shouldn't be encouraging policy that creates fewer farmers and encourages more use of synthetic chemicals. We also need to encourage the new generation of farmers who are yearning to grow food but are held back by such things as lack of access to land and health insurance. On that note, please increase funding for such things as the Value-Added Producers Grants Program and guarantee \$25 million per year for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program and fund the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative at \$30 million per year in mandatory funding. Thank you so much.

Comment of Retha Burnett

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 12, 2012, 9:57 a.m.

City, State: Garnett, KS

Occupation: Supported Living Assistant for Developmentally Disabled Persons Served

Comment: I have worked in this field for over eleven years. I do a lot of shopping for my folks and assist them with making their money stretch each month. They work in workshops and other local area jobs to try to supplement their disability checks but grocery prices are rising faster than the money they can earn. Without food stamps most of my folks will not be able to get the nutrition they need to be healthy. Before coming to my job I currently hold, I ran a licensed daycare for over 18 years. I know about nutrition and how important to have the right amount of protein, carbs, and fats a individual needs to be healthy. With the proposed cuts my folks WILL NOT be able to have their nutrition needs met. Please don't put that burden on organizations and churches that are barely surviving themselves. My folks did not ask to be born with their disabilities. They fight every day to survive until the next day. They are my angels here on Earth. I work for a low wage even thou I have been at my job for over 11 years. I struggle to make a living out of low wages but to see their smiles each day brings sunshine to my life each day. I am so proud of them and they are the real heroes. Please consider those who by no fault of their needs these programs such as SNAP. Thank you for taking your valuable time to read this plea.

Sincerely,

Retha Burnett.

Comment of Deborah Burns

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:02 a.m.

City, State: Williamstown, MA

Occupation: Book Editor

Comment: As a book editor overseeing books on farming, I am witnessing a groundswell of interest in small farms--from both producers and consumers. Our area of Mass. is still rural, and a revival of the local food system will help all levels of the community access fresher food and keep farmers on the land, which has inestimable benefits. I urge you to approve the aspects of the farm bill that will support small farmers, moderate-sized farmers, beginning farmers, sustainable farming, nutrition programs, and the health of our environment--in other words, a fair and healthy future for all involved.

Comment of Edward Burns

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:03 p.m.

City, State: Ocala, FL

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Your proposed subsidized insurance program will allow giant commodity farmers and insurance companies to walk away with billions in taxpayer dollars while putting the land, soil and

environment at greater risk.

We don't need more pesticide/herbicide laden foods by the giant monopolies. We need healthy organic foods that our small farmers grow. They are the ones that need your help and protection!

Comment of George Burns

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 7:37 p.m.

City, State: Loysville, PA

Occupation: Retired

Comment:

1. Support food democracy.
2. Support all measures that facilitate local farmer successful operations without intrusive and expensive government regulations.
3. Support legitimate measures that facilitate organic food production, advertising and sales.
4. Support measures that streamline government agencies providing regulations and oversight of American farmers.
5. Eliminate illegitimate farm subsidies.
6. Eliminate cozy relationships between large corporate farms and their suppliers and Federal congressional and administrative agencies. Protect local, small family farmers from excessive government intrusion. It is big business farms and food processing facilities that cause the vast majority of food contamination; not small/local farms. In fact, supporting small/local farms is the best means to contain any such outbreaks.

Comment of Jeff Burns

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 2:02 a.m.

City, State: Van Nuys, CA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Stop subsidizing corn and other food exports that destroy small farmers in foreign countries. Stop subsidies to large corporate farms and support small family farms. Support non-GMO and Organic producers. Stop the contamination of heirloom crops by GMO's.

Comment of Scott Burns

Date Submitted: Tuesday, May 15, 2012, 8:03 p.m.

City, State: Franklin, NC

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Other

Size: 151-300 acres

Comment: As a healthy food consumer and producer of food for myself and close friends I want to give some input on what values I place in our farm bill! I am drawing upon a friend's research but would like to share these three ideas with you as to how money should be appropriated for the bill that I feel is Most important.

Here are three suggestions!

1. Community Food Projects Program--\$10 million per year to help communities build food self-reliance.
2. Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program--\$20 million per year to develop farmers market capacity and create food hubs to connect farmers with schools, hospitals, grocery stores and other markets.
3. Hunger-Free Community Incentive Grants--An average of \$20 million per year for a new SNAP local fruit and vegetable incentive grant program at farmers markets and other healthy food retailers.

Comment of Michael R. Buron, Sr., IHHP

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 8:36 a.m.

City, State: Forked River, NJ

Occupation: Holistic Health Practitioner

Comment: Dear House Agriculture Committee,

I am a Healthcare Professional who works with local Doctors in my

area. I see their patients and help them with chronic health complaints. The first item on the agenda is the quality of their food. The best solution to this is to introduce them to local farmers who are following the principles of organic farming. It is unfortunate that the Government only allows to subsidize commercial farming of crops such as the conventional farming of soy and corn, in order to artificially lower the cost of these foods. You are in essence supporting the destruction of our soils by allowing mono cropping and the use of harmful fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides, all of which encourage soil depletion and contamination of our food supply and environment.

I urge you to consider the fact that without proper stewardship of the land, as promoted by organic farming, the U.S. will continue to lose farmable land and increase our reliance on outside sources to feed our own citizens. It is impossible to produce healthy crops or animals from depleted, polluted soils. It is the subsequently impossible to have a healthy population from eating depleted, poisoned crops and sick animals.

Please do not let the large lobbying groups cloud your vision on what is best for the people. After all, you are supposed to represent the masses of voters, not large corporations only concerned with profit and not health.

Respectfully yours,

Michael R. Buron, Sr., IHHP.

Comment of Kelly Burrell

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 6:16 p.m.

City, State: Bristol, CT

Occupation: Retail

Comment: We need to preserve, help & fund sustainable agriculture, not make cuts in these areas. Agribusiness can afford to fend for itself and is not looking out for the best interests of the people. Local, organic farmers are. Our future lies with them. The only way we are going to get healthy is to stop eating factory farmed products and get back to eating healthy animals and organically grown, non-GMO fruits & vegetables. Please support local agriculture.

Comment of Kathy Burrow

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:40 p.m.

City, State: Elkhorn, NE

Occupation: Residential Manager/Social Services

Comment: Dear House Agriculture Committee,

As a lifetime resident of Nebraska and a concerned parent, I am contacting you in regard to the farm bill issue. In my opinion it is extremely important to end subsidies for the large corporate agricultural operations which are making huge profits and focus on helping out the family farmers who desperately need the assistance in order to be able to continue to make a livable income in the face of large scale competition. Our great state has a long standing heritage of family farms which has helped make us the proud hard working people we are today. We have an obligation to stand by the family farms in our state and making them our top priority. Without this approach the jobless rate in our area will only worsen as farmers leave farming because they can no longer make enough money to support their families.

Thanks for your thoughtful consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Kathy Burrow.

Comment of Mary Burrows

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:32 a.m.

City, State: Reno, NV

Occupation: Artist

Comment: It's time to get smart about food and do what's right for the people . . . not corporations. After becoming a parent, I've educated myself and have come to realize that large corporations are controlling the food system and the majority of the United States doesn't know what real food is. We can change this and it can start with you. Please educate yourself as much as you can as to the harms of factory farming, pesticides, GMOs, and fake food. Our people and farmers (not corporations) deserve better, as well as our animals. Thank you!

Comment of Alan Burstein

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 09, 2012, 6:52 p.m.

City, State: Austin, TX

Occupation: Certified Internal Auditor

Comment: Please help the poor and hungry with the farm bill. There are millions of people (including me) who are still unemployed. I have not had a job in 8 months. Please, please do not cut funds from the hungry and poor--its just wrong. We are hungry enough as it is.

Thank you.

Comment of Mimi Burstein

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 6:56 p.m.

City, State: Paoli, PA

Occupation: Librarian

Comment: I am very concerned that programs to conserve land and water resources are fully funded and that all efforts are made to ensure cooperation with conservation efforts by all those involved in agricultural businesses. Also, I strongly support any and all efforts to fund research into organic farming practices. American citizens care very much about healthy food, safe water and protections for our land, and if damage to these resources is allowed to go unchecked, those of you who have permitted this to happen will be held to account by the electorate.

Comment of Gerri Burton

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:15 p.m.

City, State: Bryn Mawr, PA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Everyone in the U.S. benefits from a fair farm bill. Cutting funding to vital programs that ensure access to nutritional diets and cutting funding for organic and sustainable agriculture is penny-wise and pound foolish.

Comment of Kate Burton

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:43 p.m.

City, State: Vancouver, WA

Occupation: School Librarian

Comment: As big agribusiness pushes out the little farmer and as bio and chemical engineered crops pollute our environmentally sound crops, we need to support the small farms by protecting their rights. Please do not encourage large corporate farms to change the dynamics of farming in a way that will be detrimental to the land, our seeds and the small farmers who struggle to make ends meet. The number of unique species is shrinking as we succumb to uniform crops planted by mindless corporations. We need ensure that we continue to promote a rich seed base and that we eliminate chemically altered and bio engineered crops that limit the crops we have and will potentially one day jeopardize farming. As we alter crops with chemicals, we also alter the pests who attack these crops. If our crop pool is limited and the pests are hardy, we could come up with a situation where we can no longer provide a quality food product. Our actions have consequences and we need to consider them.

Comment of Mark Burwinkel

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:01 p.m.

City, State: Cincinnati, OH

Occupation: Retired Veteran

Comment: Please support organic and small local farming. Don't cut \$4 million from organic research funding and cut in half funding to support Beginning Farmers. Oppose GMO's and genetic pollution and Monsanto suing for genetic pollution.

Comment of Jeff Bush

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 2:41 p.m.

City, State: Yoncalla, OR

Occupation: Anthropologist

Comment: Corporations have too long dominated our farming and industrial infrastructure. It has lead to a serious disregard for the public's health, our ecology and economy. We need to get money and power back in the hands of small farmers and businesses who have a genuine concern for the physical and economic health and well being of the people of this country.

Let's get our priorities straight. We broke away from Britain a little more than 200 years ago not only because of the king's taxes, but because of corporate abuses. We have already fallen into the same trap, and now we must get out of it.

Agribusiness neither deserves nor needs our money and should be cut off cold. Put that money into the hands that really need it and will do some good with it.

Comment of Sarah Bush

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:44 a.m.

City, State: Belmont, MA

Occupation: Business Owner Of Healthcare Business

Comment: Please act on the behalf of us citizens who care about the future for our children. Act on the behalf of creating sustainable and healthy sources of food so that we can engineer our future and make it what we want it to be rather than having the environment fight back at us in the form of disease, mal-nutrition, poor soil quality. Please seize this opportunity to lay good agricultural plans for our future that are safe, responsible and sustainable. Please! The time has come!

Thank you,

Sarah Bush.

Comment of Bryan Bushley

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:56 p.m.

City, State: Honolulu, HI

Comment: We need to be promoting more healthy, sustainable choices for our agriculture, while supporting more small and medium sized farmers. Maintaining strong support, incentives and programs to ensure nutrition, conservation and organic agriculture. Please support these measures in the farm bill!

Comment of Martha W.D. Bushnell

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 10, 2012, 5:16 p.m.

City, State: Boulder, CO

Occupation: Homemaker

Comment: Please pass a strong farm bill that protects programs like SNAP, TEFAP, and CSFP which help provide food for millions of America's most vulnerable children and seniors.

Please ensure that no millionaires receive farm subsidies. The cut off point for farm subsidies should really be \$250,000. That is cut off farm subsidies for all farmers making more than \$1/4 million.

Comment of Niles Busler

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:23 p.m.

City, State: Townsend, MA

Occupation: Real Estate Broker

Comment: If the government puts corporate interests above the people (consumers) then eventually both will lose. The government must regulate the ambitions of corporations to "promote the general welfare", as mandated in our Constitution. Individual citizens generally have only one weapon against corporate greed their elected representatives. If our elected representatives won't do the job we elected them to do, then we will need remove them by election and replace them with more responsive politicians.

Comment of Justin Buswell

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:33 p.m.

City, State: Oceanside, CA

Occupation: Sales

Comment: Our food should be safe from the use of harmful chemical of any type at any level. Animals should be treated humanely with pasture and space as well as sun and air. They should have much room to roam. Really our food should be produced just like the advertising we get with it shows. Smiling cows and open fields. Really it should be common sense.

Comment of Alison Butler

Date Submitted: Tuesday, May 15, 2012, 8:47 p.m.

City, State: Portland, OR

Occupation: Resource Specialist for Community College Students

Comment: Our students depend on programs like SNAP to feed their families. While I do not support farm subsidies to large corporate farms, I believe the supplemental nutrition programs are crucial.

Comment of Christin Butler

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 11:08 a.m.

City, State: Columbus, OH

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: I'd like to see more support for small family farms that serve local markets and less support for industrial scale farms.

Thanks, and please keep us eaters in mind. We want access to fresh, healthy, and local food for our families.

Comment of Elizabeth Butler

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:25 p.m.

City, State: Henderson, KY

Occupation: Computer Administrator

Comment: Priority needs to be given to small producers, family farms, and organic farming.

Large subsidies to big industrial ag firms and absentee landlords are a waste of taxpayer dollars and eliminating them is a good way to reduce the deficit.

Comment of Lisa Butler

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:27 p.m.

City, State: St. Cloud, FL

Occupation: Realtor

Comment: Please stop this tyranny!

Please stop agenda 21, which is ultimately what this issue and many others is all about!

Please stop trying to kill your fellow humans with poisons . . . GMO's . . . pharmaceuticals . . . pesticides . . . chemtrails that are intentional spraying of toxins and metal particles into the atmosphere!

We want organic food and labeling of GMO's and all other toxic ingredients, including hormones injected into anything!

At least 40 countries are treating their citizens better than the us government is treating citizens here! Reps have forgotten their oath of office and that they work for we the people . . . not "them."

Bring on peace & unity and kick greed to the curb . . . no, kick it off the planet! It is time to let love rule and freedom reign for Earth and all inhabitants! (Bold used for emphasis, never yelling)

Comment of Rebekah Butler

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:06 p.m.

City, State: Branford, CT

Occupation: Photographer

Comment: Our basic survival needs are clean water and clean food. Without proper funding, education and support for our country's farmers, citizens and political leaders, we will most certainly be negatively affected and suffer the consequences. It is due time to praise our farmers and advocate for a healthy food and agricultural industry if we are to prevail in the future.

Comment of Shelby Butler

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 8:59 p.m.

City, State: Jackson, MS

Occupation: Middle School Teacher

Comment: I wish the farm bill wasn't so focused on corn and soy and instead looked to promoting smaller family farms that produce vegetables. I am particularly interested in supporting more sustainable farming practices.

Thank you,

Shelby.

Comment of Lisa Butterfield

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 7:02 p.m.

City, State: Eureka, CA

Occupation: Retired Educator

Comment: I live in a rural county with many small family farms. Our children need to grow up knowing that there is a place for them and a meaningful life available working on a small family farm.

Comment of Lisa Buzzard

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 1:32 p.m.

City, State: Winston-Salem, NC

Occupation: Consumer

Comment: Please . . . Please . . . Protect our country! I believe a sustainable healthy and as close to natural (Organic) farming is the only way to ensure our health and safety.

These are the topics I hope you will support!

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods,
Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the
Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that
enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to
compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer
and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

I feel support for organic farming is vital and would provide jobs
for many as more small family farms could thrive! Our rural areas
should be preserved and cherished.

And an aside Please Label all GMO food! I am not a guinea pig!
Thank you
Sincerely,

Lisa Buzzard.

Comment of Robert Byers

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 6:56 p.m.

City, State: Spring, TX

Occupation: Purchasing

Comment: I would like to see organic farming as a priority in this
bill for our citizen's good nutrition and health. Please prune the Big
Ag subsidies and instead focus upon real capitalistic approaches such
as correct labeling (i.e., Genetically Modified) so that consumers can
purchase correctly with full knowledge of what they are purchasing. Let
the markets show how well capitalism can work by leveling the playing
field in the food business--reward hard working organic farmers with
their outstanding food products, and stop subsidizing Big Ag through
tax payer subsidies. Thanks.

Comment of Dorothy Byrne

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:11 p.m.

City, State: Port Townsend, WA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Stop subsidizing corn. It's poisoning our food supply,
creating obesity. National public health problem. Stop being owned by
Monsanto. It's a disgrace. Watch your votes because I am. I do not
trust anything but local organic and local meat eggs. I won't be
poisoned but what about my neighbors who are brain washed to eat
according to ag. profit pyramid that promotes vested interests not
health, e.g., sugar, grains full phytic acid. I could go on and on.

Comment of Mary Jane Byrne

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:22 p.m.

City, State: Norfolk, NY

Occupation: Retired Teacher

Comment: I want to have the healthiest, most chemical free food
possible to be available for consumers. It is often scary to realize
what is being sold to us in our stores that we think should be healthy
and isn't. Please do whatever is necessary to protect us. Thank you.

Comment of M. C.

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:32 p.m.

City, State: Snelling, CA

Comment: Please support organic farming, we need non-GMO food
production. The big agricultural businesses have more than enough money
and support to go around, organic farmers struggle far too much. Thank
you.

Sincerely,

M. C.

Comment of R. C.

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:10 p.m.

City, State: Ashland, OR

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Our Country Needs to go Organic! No GMO foods should be

allowed, Ever, anywhere! Check the records . . . GMO foods are Not healthy, but, just the opposite. America needs to Wake Up!

Comment of Judith Cabanaw

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:16 p.m.

City, State: New Boston, MI

Occupation: Retired Nurse

Comment: A good organic farm bill would support organic farmers and make it worth their while to grow clean pesticide free, Non-GMO crops/ Tax break would help them/Stop accepting lobby money from Monsanto and others who would destroy our health with pesticide and GMO laden foods. Label our food with clear, honest facts, if it has GMO products in it Label It as such. Some will choose to buy it anyway, but we need to know what we are eating and we will be healthier for it. Thank you.

Comment of Sarah Cadorette

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:43 p.m.

City, State: Shoreview, MN

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: Please consider the impact of slashing funding for food stamps assistance, a critical component of supporting the citizens in most dire need and keeping many out of certain poverty, which in turn impoverishes the nation. I support all parts of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286), and would rather see money spent on support for new and organic farmers than to give further subsidies to farmers who grow useless commercial crops, such as corn and rice (which are often just dumped as international aid, anyway, a benefit neither to our country nor the ones receiving grains they often don't consume). Thank you for your time.

Comment of Deborah Cady

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 1:16 p.m.

City, State: Manchester, CT

Occupation: Retired

Comment: Please do not cut funding for Organic Research. This research has much more long term benefit to human welfare, including your children and grandchildren, than the dangerous and destructive methods of Industrial farmers or planters who subscribe to Monsanto-like GMO crops.

Farming with sustainable methods is the future. Think of providing your off-spring with cancer-free, neurologically healthy lives and promote chemical-free farming and food.

Comment of Elisa Cafferata

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 09, 2012, 1:22 a.m.

City, State: Reno, NV

Occupation: Women's Health Care

Comment: Our health centers see over 50,000 clients a year in Nevada. Almost all of them are without insurance and struggling to make ends meet. Now, more than ever, the direct services our patients receive--including SNAP--are critical to their families' health and survival. Please protect our clients.

Comment of Ariel Caldwell

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 02, 2012, 2:47 p.m.

City, State: Stone Mountain, GA

Occupation: Student

Comment: As you the next farm bill is being considered I would really like you to keep in mind U.S. minorities and young adults. Currently, the next farm bill is doing little to support these two demographics. The funding for Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program is inadequate and must be increased if we are to have proper support. Further, minorities are only increasing in terms of U.S. population, therefore, they should be supported as they will become, and already are, the new backbone of America.

Also, I really support the current proposed reforms to commodity subsidies that would replace the automatic direct payments with a shallow loss revenue-based payment. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Ariel.

Comment of Constance Caldwell

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 12:27 a.m.

City, State: Asheville, NC

Occupation: Bookseller

Comment: American food should be sustainably good. We work hard and need to insure our diet be one with health objectives and to be good fuel for our bodies. Good rules for healthy food is a must!

Comment of James Callaway

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:45 p.m.

City, State: Franklin, TN

Occupation: Botanical Processing

Comment: It is crucial that we craft an agricultural future that reflects the needs and desires of the public as well as the stewardship of our Earth and its resources. Organic and natural farming should be encouraged both as essential for quality food production and as a job creating enterprise. There is no excuse for not labeling GMO crops. The feeling is that our government has sold out to Monsanto and other big ag businesses.

You have the opportunity to be part of a solution. Please don't let it pass you by.

Comment of Tracy Callow

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 12, 2012, 3:08 p.m.

City, State: Wimberley TX

Occupation: Graphic Designer

Comment: My family relies heavily upon the local farmers to bring fresh, healthy organic produce to our table daily. Every year, more and more of our local farmers are driven out of business because it's so difficult to compete with the Agri-giants, funded by our government. They are the same ones polluting our waterways, clogging our system with Genetically Modified Organisms (to which my kids are allergic), and driving out existence varieties of vegetables due to their large scale monoculture. Our fine country desperately needs a farm bill that invests in the next generation of farmers and ranchers--not the rich Agri-giants--by guaranteeing \$25 million per year in mandatory funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. A strategy and commitment to support beginning farmer and ranchers entering agriculture is desperately needed. With an aging farm population, now is the time to invest in the future of American agriculture by nurturing new agriculture start-ups and supporting the small farmer more than the large farming corporations.

Comment of Roderick Calloway

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:25 a.m.

City, State: Frederick, MD

Occupation: Retired Pilot

Comment: The most important issue related to farming in this country is the strangle hold Monsanto has on the Legislators in congress. Family farms are becoming Extinct because Monsanto GMO seeds can unintentionally infect natural farms, thereby allowing Monsanto the right to sue otherwise innocent farmers of patent infringement. If you allow this monster to continue, your children will and grandchildren will become forever mutated from eating mutated foods. (A hint to the wise is sufficient).

Comment of Lester Caltvedt

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:27 p.m.

City, State: Elmhurst, IL

Occupation: Professor

Comment: I urge you to support organic and healthy agriculture. We buy only organic, if the products are available. We are in a health crisis, which is much worse than the deficit issue!

Comment of Dorothy Calvani

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 17, 2012, 6:46 p.m.

City, State: New York, NY

Occupation: Nurse

Comment: Our 2012 Farm Bill needs reforms that will:

Ensure a sustainable future for American agriculture

Create jobs and spur economic opportunities

Equip rural communities for the 21st century

Level the playing field for producers

Support innovation for tomorrow's farmers

Protect our natural resources

Thank you.

Comment of Christopher Camera

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:33 p.m.

City, State: Columbus, OH

Occupation: Business

Comment: I am a veteran who served honorably in the military and comes from a long line of American patriots--dating back to the founding of this country and work with other such people who feel the same as me.

Stop corporations that are slow-killing the American people. Stop Monsanto and Dow from poisoning us--or else we will demand that they and you be forced to eat the GMO food yourselves. Why is does the Federal government raise the radiation levels of what is considered safe, thousands of times after Fukishima? Why are the Federal government and media covering up the massive fallout occurring and building up in the U.S. food, water, and air supply? Why are the leaders letting people be poisoned and die from this radiation and telling the people who they are supposed to serve? What do we need to do--start measuring ourselves all the radiation so we have it documented and then have a trial to try all our so called leaders for manslaughter and collusion with the monopolies? Once found guilty, the just punishment would be for those public servants to be forced to eat the GMO radiated food and water and not have any other options--like many poor people do not these days, after the monopolies in the banks have deliberately gambled away \$1 quadrillion and then expect the taxpayers to bail them--so they can continue crushing small businesses and any sense of a free market.

You're our public servants--not our kings--and we do not serve you--you have the honor of serving us. Do your jobs! The research from Dr. Don Huber and many others shows that GMO's cause organ damage and infertility. Why were there no safety studies done before putting this on the market--are you colluding with elites to kill us? Why are European countries, that are in many scientific areas much more advanced than the U.S., protecting their citizens from this poison while Americans are being poisoned? Any and all Federal officials in any three branches will be held accountable to the American people and God Almighty for any and all approval of letting this happen. May the Lord deal with you ever so severely if you do not start protecting the people like your supposed to do.

Comment of Annika Cameron

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:33 p.m.

City, State: New York, NY

Occupation: Artist

Comment: THE most important issue to me has become FOOD. In a country where supposedly we have no want for food availability and options, I have found that I worry about it more than anything else. I will not eat food that someone has compromised for their own gain. I will not allow my children to be guinea pigs of profiteers.

Comment of Christopher Cameron

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 1:26 p.m.

City, State: Seattle, WA

Occupation: Preschool Teacher

Comment: I believe that nutrition is the first and foremost strength of a people. We're either living well together or suffering heedlessly. Funding health supplies both direct, and more importantly, indirect and long-lasting/long-term benefits which gives rise to a system of vigor and high function rather than one that becomes sick and seeks (as we begin to do) to self-annihilate/sabotage/depreciate.

Comment of Karen Cameron

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:40 p.m.

City, State: Seattle, WA

Occupation: CFO

Comment: Please stop funding the agricultural status quo and start funding local, sustainable, organic farming, conservation and education. Corporate agriculture and our corporate food culture are destroying our top soil and polluting our rivers, devastating the health of our people and driving up medical costs for preventable "lifestyle" diseases. Please stop bowing to big money and start

leading our country to a better place.

Comment of Sally Cameron

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:21 a.m.

City, State: Rancho Santa Margarita, CA

Occupation: Chef, Food Blogger, Health Coach

Comment: You must make the farm bill work, not for big agriculture and big government, but for all of America and the people who count on good food for their families. This Must change! Please, fight to make it happen!

Comment of C.H. Cammon

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 06, 2012, 11:47 a.m.

City, State: Atlanta, GA

Occupation: Senior Community Service Coordinator

Comment: Why is there a proposed budget cut?

Has the Food Stamp budget decreased? If so, why are there advertisements encouraging seniors to apply?

If there is a budget issue, why not limit what participants can purchase? Presently, no non-food items can be purchased. What about excluding Shrimp, Lobster, Crab, T-Bone Steaks, Prime Ribs, Standing Rib Roast, high end food items. The "working people" who works 365, are surviving on group beef, pork, chicken and just plain fish. What about all the junk food? There should be a listing of what nutritious items that can be purchased. I agree that we should help the needy with their nutritious needs, but I believe also that there should be some type of control as to what can be purchased.

I believe that if the distribution of the food benefit would return to the way that the Government Commodities were given many years ago, more people would find jobs.

We complain about people being over-weight, a lot of people are eating very well . . .

I agree that many individuals need support, but some do not, there are holes in the system and some fall in and never come out. Some people have been receiving and not needing . . . but dressing better, eating better and bragging about how they're getting over on the system . . . something is wrong, and the real needy are being left in the behind.

I believe that the minimum benefit for seniors 65 and over with low income should be \$25.00, and they should not have to provide any type of bills . . .

Do the policymakers really know and understand what is going on in the "valley of truth"? Do the policymakers really care?

Why not set up focus group sessions to get opinions? I would definitely love to voice additional opinions and suggestions.

When can the public meet before the Members of the House Committee on Agriculture?

Thank you.

Comment of David Camp

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 6:52 p.m.

City, State: Bellingham, WA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Forestry, Fruits, Greenhouse/nursery, Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Please use the power of government to foster and protect small local farmers. Agribusiness doesn't need subsidies; agribusiness should sink or swim without government assistance.

And re-legalize hemp! What kind of evil monopoly capitalist endeavor would ban it in the first place? Why don't you start representing the people and not the monopoly capitalists who buy you your jobs?

Systematic corruption is hard to overcome but don't you have any moral compass at all?

Comment of Benita Campbell

Date Submitted: Friday, April 27, 2012, 9:00 a.m.

City, State: Burgettstown, PA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Other

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: First of all, separating us into producers and non-producers is very divisive. There are wealthy individuals who farm just enough parcels on their estates only for the purpose of subsidies. Second, I'm concerned about heartless politicians who magically believe that further restricting food stamps to people, some whose only income

is food stamps, will make hunger go away. Perhaps these politicians think hunger in America is fine as long as we don't pay attention to it. As long as we continue to grind down the economy with budget cuts, hunger will rise.

Comment of C. Martin Campbell

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:39 p.m.

City, State: Draper, UT

Occupation: Scuba Instructor/Scuba Business Owner

Comment: You only need to see the proliferation of organic produce in your local supermarket to realize this is a wonderful & sustainable practice. Please do the right thing here folks. Make your children proud of you. Thanks!

Sincerely,

C. Martin Campbell & Family.

Comment of Holly Campbell

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:41 p.m.

City, State: Athens, GA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Specialty Crops

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: To whom it may concern:

All people deserve fresh, clean, healthy food. As the public wakes up to the practices of modern agriculture: eroded soils, polluted water, GMO crop dangers, degraded wildlife and ecology, and spikes in human illness, there is a demand for alternatives to these outmoded practices. People want organic agriculture (as evidenced in its exponential market growth) and the demand for buying local, chemical free produce, humanely raised meats & eggs, and from farms committed to wisely using their natural resources has continued to increase. The market is there, the farms are there, but we need to support this movement equally to modern agriculture.

Organic agriculture is the future of farming. Fund the future, not the practices that are harming our future, like modern agriculture. We need to funnel significant farm bill funds towards the public's interest, not the corporate interest. Please support organic agriculture and sustainable natural resource management for equal if not greater funding in the upcoming farm bill, because it is the future. We need to better support, financially shaping that future today.

Warmly,

Holly Campbell.

Comment of Sue Campbell

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:29 p.m.

City, State: Blue Ridge, GA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Field Crops, Fruits, Livestock, Vegetables

Size: 50-150 acres

Comment: Folks, I'm a 51 acre farm owner in a rural area of Southern Appalachia. What little I know and understand of the politics of addressing farm issues, I plead with you to keep the small scale farmers assisted and not threatened by the 'big boys'. Also important for you to consider (on behalf of the small farmer) is the threat of the 'big guys' in their crowding out the small farmer with GMO tactics that are dangerous to the basic food quality for the people to eat as well as to the livelihood of us farmers. Not only scary, there reeks of political favors and all the side issues of power-plays the small farmer has no 'in' to counter. We are all too darn busy keeping going!

Having been born and raised in rural Indiana, I know of relatives who have 'sold out' to the 'big guys' for the money and increased crop production--at the expense of health and who knows 'what' for future generations. Most of the folks I know (here and in Indiana) are not educated to what they are doing in the long run to jeopardize generations of people. Too much goes on over the heads of the common man.

As an overall plea, Please consider the welfare of basic farming practices without cow-towing to the 'big guys' promoting poisons and pesticides and GMO's. We farmers are an independent bunch, hard-working, and honest. We provide sustainable methods and quality food. That's the bottom line in deciding where to go from here!

Thank you so much for allowing this forum that I hope is earnest and not just a placating measure.

Sue Campbell.

Comment of Susan Campbell

Date Submitted: Thursday, May 10, 2012, 5:19 p.m.

City, State: Oak Park, IL

Occupation: Healthcare IT Analyst

Comment: Dear Representative Davis,

Please fight hard to reverse any cuts made to the SNAP program in the farm bill. I volunteer at my local food pantry and I see the people this program helps every month. My understanding is that this is a well-run program and that the money spent in our communities has a positive ripple effect. I know that we have to get our fiscal house in order, but it does not reflect well on us to balance our books on the backs of the poor when we are unwilling to raise taxes or close tax loopholes for those with influence.

Thank you,

Susan Campbell.

Comment of Cleraine Camper

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 16, 2012, 9:04 p.m.

City, State: Oak Park, IL

Occupation: Social Worker

Comment: Please do not cut benefits to needy families and low income individuals who struggle to feed themselves and their families. I am involved with an number of hunger organizations and have face to face contact with hungry people. They need assistance from their political representatives to help them get the food they need to feed their family. Why can't we, as one of the richest nations in the world feed our people and our children. Something is wrong if we cannot so this. I ask for your help, not only in your vote, but in being a voice for the people who need help to eat. No one should be hungry on America.

Comment of Mark Canright

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:21 p.m.

City, State: Asbury, NJ

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Dear Congressman Lance and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture:

I am an organic farmer in New Jersey and I am hoping you will pass a farm bill in 2012 that supports organic farming, conservation programs including the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), and the Beginning Farmer Program.

My family and I preserved our farm in 2004 using funds from FRPP, which is currently being combined with the Wetlands Reserve Program into a combined easement program. We hope you will fully fund this easement program, as it helps protect our critical farmland and wetlands.

I am concerned that farmers must be held to Conservation Compliance if they/we expect to receive any type of farm subsidy. As farmers, we face many threats to our land and water due to a changing climate and pollution, and we must do everything we can to keep our natural resources clean for all future generations. Taxpayers pay for most of the farmers insurance premiums at a price of over \$7 billion a year, and should expect a return from those receiving these payments in the form of natural resource conservation.

I strongly urge you to tie conservation requirements to federally subsidized crop insurance premium subsidies. To receive commodity subsidies or farm bill conservation payments, producers should have to comply with soil erosion prevention plans if they farm highly erodible land and promise not to drain any wetlands on their property. As you know, under the original conservation provision passed by Congress as part of the 1985 Farm Bill these very basic requirements applied to the receipt of crop insurance subsidies, but that requirement was later removed as part of the 1996 Farm Bill.

I agree with the National Farmers Union position of support for "the reestablishment of compliance requirements for Federal crop insurance eligibility so that all existing or new crop and revenue insurance or other risk management programs are subject to all conservation compliance provisions."

Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment on the 2012 Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

Mark Canright,
Asbury, NJ.

Comment of Margaret Canter

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 7:22 p.m.

City, State: Tallahassee, FL

Occupation: Nurse-Midwife

Comment: End subsidies to industrial farming and support the small farmers who need the help to produce healthy foods for our families. As a nurse-midwife I see the poor health consequences of government support to monoculture farming that makes sugary high fat food cheap. We need more small farms producing fruits and vegetables without the use of harmful pesticides.

Comment of Judy Cantor-Navas

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:32 p.m.

City, State: Los Angeles, CA

Occupation: Writer/Music Programmer

Comment: We need infrastructure for providing healthy nutrition for our families, not practices that put our health in danger for the benefit of corporations. Create legislation that supports organic farming and access to healthy food for all.

Judy Cantor-Navas.

Comment of Pat Cantwell

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:18 p.m.

City, State: Boulder, CO

Occupation: Computer Programmer

Comment: Please support only sustainable, organic farming practices! It is the only way we can protect future generations! Nature never intended itself to see chemicals and we must guard that closely for our children's sake!

Comment of Elise Caplan

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 9:16 a.m.

City, State: St. Petersburg, FL

Occupation: Independent Sales

Comment: We as Americans have become scared of our food the more we learn and see of the atrocities happening through ultra mechanized farming and bad animal care.

There is proof in the upswing popularized farmers markets. We want our food grown small and local and that's all there is to it.

Comment of Nancy Caponi

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 6:29 p.m.

City, State: Santa Barbara, CA

Occupation: Nonprofit Director

Comment: It is time to end tax-payer subsidies to huge agribusiness corporations that are destroying our clean air and water resources with dangerous GMO crops and toxic chemical applications. Instead, we want our tax dollars to support the food stamp program and small organic farmers only. Thank you.

Comment of Carole Capriotti-May

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:45 p.m.

City, State: Wilmington, DE

Occupation: Retired Registered Nurse/Nutritionist

Comment: The time has arrived that we have to act on feeding ourselves Healthfully in a responsible Qualitative manner as a nation instead of quantitatively. We are creative enough to halt the congested wheels of quantitative corporate feeding of ourselves and still be able to ensure all get nourished in this nation. Just let us do it! Transform agribusiness as it is known now to All organic, locally produced food supply and I feel totally confident that our creativity amongst our nation's people will pull together to ensure all are more healthfully nourished. Please Be Bold & Courageous and do what is right for our health & prosperity as a nation!

Comment of Noel Carden

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:03 a.m.

City, State: Richmond, VA

Occupation: Sales Executive

Comment: I support the elimination or minimization of subsidies to large agribusiness and would like to see our farm policy work more for the benefit of smaller farmers.

Comment of Katie Cardenas

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:59 p.m.

City, State: Garner, NC

Occupation: Educator

Comment: In so many ways, it is important that we make a stand for this bill:

Nutrition programs are critical to the health of children, but also to the well-being of our future. Hungry or undernourished children cannot learn as well so we are draining our future's intellect.

Give opportunities for people to become the answer. Funding programs that support beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, organic farming, regional farm and food economies, and rural development. We need more farmers and ranchers, more sustainable food production, and more economic opportunity in our food system. When we support our farms, we value our land. We will better protect and preserve what we value.

Let people farm. Enough of machines in the field and suits in the office running things. Support family farmers that really need help, not the biggest farms that don't:

End subsidies (aka direct payments and countercyclical commodity programs), and replace them with loophole-free agriculture risk coverage. Additionally, implement a cap on crop insurance premium subsidies;

Ensure that limited conservation funding maximizes lasting environmental benefits: Limit funds to Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) for animal waste management infrastructure by eliminating the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Livestock Set-aside and protect the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) from disproportionate cuts, and improve it by ranking applications solely on their conservation benefits.

Comment of Melina Cardenas

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 11:33 a.m.

City, State: Draper, UT

Occupation: Administrative Manager

Comment: I support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

I believe it is very important, in fact the responsibility of people in power, to maintain order over the food that is being produced in this country. I do not believe that a giant agribusiness necessarily has in mind, the good of the people it is feeding, on the contrary, it feasts on profits. It is important to allow organic farmers to thrive, in order to let that choice of food be an option for people in this country. It is never a good thing when one entity has such a great deal of power; healthy competition is necessary to create a beneficial balance for the citizens of this country.

Comment of Tonya Cardwell

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 11:14 a.m.

City, State: Blacksburg, VA

Occupation: Mother

Comment: The "quick fix" that companies like Monsanto provide for our food is nothing but detrimental to the welfare of the American people. Sacrificing millions of people's health and safety for the sake of a handful of CEO's profits is a disgusting practice and can Not

continue.

Comment of Anne Carey

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 7:29 a.m.

City, State: Highland Park, NJ

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: I support a farm bill that is fair and supports healthy food.

I support the full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286). I also support fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

As well as supporting the implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236) and maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

I want this farm bill to put the health of the people and the small farms ahead of the interests of the industrial agricultural lobbyists. The only way to stop the obesity epidemic in this country is to support the production of real food, not food derived from various corn products. There are thousands of people in this country that want to work towards this and we need a farm bill which supports that goal or gives us an opportunity to build our future. Thank you.

Comment of Doris Carey

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:32 p.m.

City, State: Cherry Hill, NJ

Occupation: Retired Biochemist and Nutritionist

Comment: Protect the farmer who makes his living by farming not the people who grow a little produce to get lower taxes. Also no subsidies to mega agriculture. Protect the organic farmers from the cross pollination and wind drift from GMO crops.

Comment of Theodore Carlat

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 6:44 p.m.

City, State: Dayton, WA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Poultry/poultry products

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Support Certified Organic agriculture and local food production. No More corn and soy subsidies. Support small farms, and farm diversity not mono-cropping. Fund a food system that feeds people nutrition not mass commodity crops. Local, Organic and Fair competition for food producers. Do Not subsidize chemical farming at all. Stop the chemical dependency now.

Comment of Andrew Carlile

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:40 p.m.

City, State: Salt Lake City, UT

Occupation: Mechanical Engineer

Comment: With healthcare costs soaring, an obesity epidemic, and diabetes rates increasing something in our food system has to change. We can't allow profits to come before the health of the general population. Organic and or healthy food needs to be a priority.

Comment of Drew Carlson

Date Submitted: Friday, May 11, 2012, 1:40 p.m.

City, State: Madison, WI

Occupation: Energy Efficiency Advisor

Comment: I believe that more of a focus on small producers providing food to local community is a must for our health. We need to work to not only improve rural food production but also urban food production as well. Please focus on sustainable, non-GMO and better that USDA organic food production policies and visions.

Comment of Gwenna Carlson

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 09, 2012, 5:45 p.m.

City, State: Richland, WA

Occupation: Retired Office Clerk

Comment: Please consider the plight of senior citizens when discussing the farm bill. We work for many years, paying taxes, but with no voice in how those taxes will be used. So far seniors have had Medicare coverage and Social Security raises reduced and when we try to go back to work to close the gap between income and expenditures, we're

unemployable except for an extremely few part time, minimum wage jobs. Most of us must choose between food and medical bills, utility and transportation, etc. Please help us retain some dignity in our advanced years by allowing some care for those of us who have put out much for many years and now must put out more for failing bodies. Thank you.

Comment of Stacey Carlson

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:03 p.m.

City, State: Brooklyn, NY

Occupation: Freelancer

Comment: It is time for real reform, not handouts to only commercial farmers. We need to protect our land from over producing and use of dangerous pesticide and GMO seeds. It is time to support and protect our nation's food supply and system but not taking the easy road and letting commercial companies take over everything.

Comment of Florence Carnahan

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:19 p.m.

City, State: Burlington Flats, NY

Occupation: Anti-Fracking Activist, Retired

Comment: I do not produce for sale, only for my family. I raise all produce, meat chickens, berries that we use during a year and I share with friends and local food pantries. I buy from neighbors who produce what I can't grow.

Small farmers are the bread and butter of a rural community like the one I live in. And we need to encourage sustainable practices not big industry farming. We need regulations that are fair and balanced--not heavily in favor of the big corporations who produce toxic products that are killing the very soil the food is growing in. The chemical industry is in control and it doesn't benefit the Americans who need to eat the food produced in our nation it only benefits the corporations. They need to be persuaded that the patriotic thing to do is to grow safe food for Americans.

We have food deserts in the urban and the rural areas. Farmers markets are important for both populations. We have to drive at least 15 miles from our home to purchase anything fresh and not found in a convenience store. How can we have healthy Americans if we can't buy healthy food? I am starting to work on a farmer's market for several adjoining towns.

Subsidies for large corporate farms is not a fair and balanced way to produce healthy food that is available to all. When we had a farm years ago we had to sell out b/c we couldn't compete with large producers or products from overseas. ``Get big or get out" is decidedly not a good American value.

There needs to be some way for small farmers to make enough money to see a future without selling out to fracking to make ends meet.

And we need farmland for food, not ethanol, gross amounts of animal feed or corn syrup, for example.

Comment of Starr Carney

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:36 p.m.

City, State: Cottonwood, AZ

Occupation: Retired

Comment: The health of the people of this country must come before the interests of big agra. Most of all, the people of this nation have the right to make choices concerning what they eat; our government is totally out of touch and act like they never got out of grade school or are from another planet.

Comment of Barbara Carolan

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:15 p.m.

City, State: Bayside, CA

Occupation: Consumer

Comment: Fresh, local, regional, statewide and national produce, fish, meats and dairy are what I buy and need to have encouraged and supported by this farm bill.

Comments of Kenneth Carolus

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:37 p.m.

City, State: Brookville, OH

Occupation: Retail Sales

Comment: I also want a 2012 Farm Bill that expands opportunities for family farmers to produce good food, sustain the environment, and contribute to vibrant communities!

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:31 p.m.

Comment: I support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Comment of Dr. Lorraine Caron

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:07 p.m.

City, State: Fort Collins, CO

Occupation: Naturopathic Physician, Mother

Comment: As a physician and a parent, I know just how important healthy food and a healthy environment is to our well-being. Our current farm bill certainly does not appropriately tend to both of these. It subsidizes corn and soy rather than fruits and vegetables. It doesn't go far enough toward supporting organic, sustainable and local farming and food initiatives. It's time to change this!

I support the full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

I support fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

I support the implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

I support maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Thank you for your time.

Dr. Lorraine Caron.

Comment of Deborah Carosella

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 7:01 p.m.

City, State: Los Altos, CA

Occupation: Self-Employed

Comment: I support the following and would encourage you to also:

1. The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).
2. Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.
3. The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).
4. Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Sustainable farming and food production, environmental protections, development of Organic farming practices, Small Farm growers, Labeling of GMO's, Humane Farming practices--these are the most important issues for a healthy citizenry, country and planet. It's time we started leading the way again and not just in profits for the agribusiness, pharmaceutical, chemical, and biotech corporations who appear to own this country.

Do Not allow for cutting funding to vital programs such as nutrition, conservation and support for organic and sustainable agriculture.

Thank you.

Comment of John Carosella

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:21 p.m.

City, State: Los Altos, CA

Occupation: Therapist/Small Business Owner

Comment: Sustainable agriculture should be our goal. Organic production methods are less costly and more effective, and Certainly more sustainable than our current conventional farming practices. GMOs are inadequately tested and demonstrably dangerous.

I support:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

I encourage you to do so as well. Any other stand should be justified in terms of the will of the people, the sustainability of agriculture in this country, and overall environmental and economic sustainability.

Let's have a farm bill that encourages healthy foods--produce, not grains and starches, smaller farms, more localized production, and organic, sustainable agriculture. Profit for agribusiness should Not be the goal of the farm bill.

A healthy, sustainable food supply for the people of the United States should be the goal, and is a fundamental responsibility of the U.S. Government. Our current system, and the elements of the current proposal that have been made public, are not in alignment with this goal and responsibility.

Think about it. Please. Don't let lobbyists and campaign funding drive your priorities. Redirect the billions of taxpayer money towards a healthy, sustainable agricultural future for America.

Make a choice for the People.

Thank you for your attention.

Comment of Amy Carpenter

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 12:08 a.m.

City, State: Eugene, OR

Occupation: Bookseller

Comment: Government support and subsidies for agriculture should NOT be going to already-profitable huge agribusinesses!

The farm bill must support the best agricultural practices: put the health of our citizens and our environment, and the livelihood of individuals (farmers and farm workers) ahead of the interests of industrial agriculture lobbyists.

To this end, I support:

The Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

The EQIP Organic Initiative.

Comment of Sue Carpenter

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 5:13 p.m.

City, State: Sequim, WA

Occupation: Retired

Comment: We feel there is room in our society for both organic and other commercial growers without one side having all the power. Please consider a more balanced approach so that those who chose to try to maintain a healthier lifestyle still have the freedom to do this. Now it seems that Monsanto holds too much power and encroaches on the rights of the small individual farmer.

Comment of Carol Carr

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:38 p.m.

City, State: Santa Rosa, CA

Occupation: Registered Nurse

Comment: Our farmers, our farms and our food need protection and support! Food is so much more than money! Please protect the farms and farmers that provide so much for a way of life that will disappear if you don't protect and preserve our lands and individual farmers.

Thank you,

Carol Carr.

Comment of Irene Carr

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:38 p.m.

City, State: Duluth, MN

Occupation: Physician

Comment: Unsubsidized, organic raised food and livestock is essential to our survival. Now is the time for all of us to make the most evolutionary choices.

Comment of Sarah Carr

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 3:44 p.m.

City, State: Plainfield, MA

Occupation: Therapist

Comment: I understand Members of the House Committee on Agriculture are currently accepting comments on the topic of agriculture. I hope you will hear and consider mine. Food is the most basic thing there is. As a therapist, I can say confidently that we literally and profoundly are what we eat. The state of food affects not just our physical health but our emotional balance and mental clarity. Food also ties together all other issues on this planet from corporate industrialization to class to spirituality to the environment and more. It is so incredibly basic that what happens with food is therefore global and far-reaching in its effects. Therefore, it is worth paying very close attention to what has happened to our food system. Whomever is overseeing food production holds an incredible amount of responsibility for the well-being of society.

I personally am very concerned about the state of so-called "food" in this country. Industrial agriculture has transformed our food system into one that is based entirely on 3 food substances: corn, soy, and wheat. Most food products at this point are food-like substances, not actual food. I used to be worried about the additives. Now I am disturbed by what happens to it before it is even grown (genetic manipulation). More and more people in this country are disconnected from the sources of food and their own bodies. So many are suffering from both obesity and malnutrition, not to mention sugar addiction caused by high fructose corn syrup in every product, food allergies created by an over-consumption of highly processed and repetitive foods, endocrinological disruptions, etc. I spend more on food than any other category on my life. It is so important to me to eat food that is healthy. I eat and want food for myself and everybody that has real nutrition and is really food, that is produced locally by people I know. I want it to be free of genetic manipulation and chemical pesticides and fertilizers. I want clean water coming out of the faucet, not full of fluoride or chlorine, and not available only in plastic bottles at the supermarket. I want a food production system that helps connect people to the source of their food, both the Earth and the people who grow it. And I want the production system to benefit all, not toxifying the air and water with chemicals nor wasting precious fossil fuels transporting it gigantic distances. I would like to see food production decision-making power given back to local governments.

Thank you for hearing and seriously considering my comments.

Comment of Cynthia Carrier

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:15 p.m.

City, State: Bristol, CT

Occupation: Sell Holistic Dog Food

Comment: I feel that it is our right as Americans to know and choose what type of foods we are buying. The use of GMO seeds is of great danger to our organic crops, other countries do not allow this type of seed. Please take this into consideration next time you eat produce grown in the USA, and when you write the next farm bill. It should not be in the hands of just big corporate America, we have all seen what that has done for this country.

Comment of Shekinah Carrillo

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 12:55 p.m.

City, State: Pahoa, HI

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Field Crops

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: Small, local food producers are better equipped to provide food for the community than are the large agribusiness farms. We need

to be supported, with more research done toward organic production. Low income households are better able to provide for themselves working within these models, with a more sustainable future for all.

Comment of Linda Carroll

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 12, 2012, 6:54 p.m.

City, State: New Orleans, LA

Occupation: Professor

Comment: Americans need a farm bill that helps small farmers, that provides people with healthy food, that protects the environment by avoiding harmful chemicals including those complicit in the Gulf Dead Zone and excessive use of water, and that helps rural communities.

Comment of Mike Carroll

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 06, 2012, 10:05 p.m.

City, State: Bernalillo, NM

Occupation: Firefighter/Paramedic

Comment: The local foodbanks are a huge investment and prevent strains on other resources like healthcare. If people can receive better nutrition many simple diseases do not get to the point where people need to utilize emergency services.

Comment of Scott Carroll

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 5:04 p.m.

City, State: West Tisbury, MA

Occupation: Landscaper/Artist/Activist

Comment: This is such an imperative issue at such a crucial time. The impact that this will have on our lives and the lives of our children and future generations is far reaching, from personal freedom to a myriad of health issues for both humans and the planet.

Comment of Susan Carroll

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 12:24 a.m.

City, State: Murray, UT

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: Farming in the United States should not be a private reserve for any business. Monsanto and other mega businesses should not be allowed to terrorize other producers. I want to eat real food--not food filled with spliced in pesticides. When a genetically modified plant kills birds and insects, that is not a plant to be eaten by humans. Return farming to farmers who care about the quality and safety of the food on my table.

Comment of Andrea Carta

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:19 p.m.

City, State: Manchester, NH

Occupation: Technical Support Representative

Comment: Support and promote Organic farming. Organic foods have a higher nutritional value. As a result, you feel fuller with less food. I am a living example of this as well as many people I know who have switched to organic foods.

Make it the Law that All GMO foods Must be labeled as such . . . No Exceptions!

No GMOs! They are extremely bad for the body, whether it is people or animal. The body is intended to take in foods as natural as the land they're on. When you start altering the food you plant, you alter the land it is growing on. Once you unleash that, you are starting a nightmare that could very like cause the land to be unusable because crops just won't grow. Even if it does grow, GMO foods have been linked to many health issues.

GMO is bad for the land. GMO is bad for the body. There is no place for it, regardless of whether it fills a company's or politician's pocket with money. In the long-run, that company and politician are going to be eating the same food they are poisoning the environment with. Once you poison the environment, there's no turning back. It's not worth the risk!

Comment of Beth Carter

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 1:06 p.m.

City, State: Shoreline, WA

Occupation: Homemaker/Gardener

Comment: In the last few years, I have had to educate myself over many related and unrelated topics regarding nutrition and health. Through connections with friends and family, the information shared

includes such notables as a USDA survey sent to landowners in Washington State asking for specifics of whether or not they grow crops on their parcels--under threat of incarceration. Yes, that's right. A survey was demanded via threat of incarceration.

Honey bees are becoming quite a hot topic and for good reason. Industrial agriculture business has become too big of a force internationally. All of this was possible due to the giveaways from the farm bill. Thus I must ask you to carefully and intentionally curb industrial concerns and protect, nay, revive interest in small farms with small net worth. Diversification is all well and good in an investment portfolio, but it has become gauche anywhere else. This, however, is exactly what is needed to save America as the dumbing down of America has begun through the food chain.

Protect family farmers from industrial concerns by working the farm bill to do just that.

Thank you for your time.

Comment of Kathy Carter

Date Submitted: Thursday, April 12, 2012, 9:10 p.m.

City, State: Chelsea, MI

Occupation: Homemaker

Comment: I'm a local food advocate and get over 70% of my food from local farms--small farms. That's sometimes hard to do, but getting easier. I want a farm bill that will make it easier for small farmers to take care of the land and reach out to local customers. I don't think large corporations need any more help in the form of subsidies, special regulations, marketing, etc.

Comment of Marjorie Carter

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 8:58 p.m.

City, State: Ballwin, MO

Occupation: Attorney/Mediator

Comment: Our food supply in this country must be safe for all of us and not laced with antibiotics and poisons or from genetically modified foods. Please pass legislation that protects our food supply and that does not protect greedy corporations.

Comment of Marion Cartwright

Date Submitted: Monday, April 30, 2012, 5:44 p.m.

City, State: Lake Forest, IL

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: As you craft the new farm bill, please retain mandatory status/funding for the Know Your Farmer/Know Your Food. In particular we need to reduce costs for farms to transition to organic practices because the long term costs of the current chemical and monoculture practices are unsustainable both for the health of the soil, the health of the American public and the health of the water and pollinators. We also need to build in incentives for farmers to sign up for conservation compliance agreements. That is all going out the window if you switch to this revenue insurance plan that has no conservation-compliance requirement. We need to diversify crops on our farms as well. Acres and acres of potatoes or almond trees or corn or soybeans is not sustainable with pesticides. I am also very concerned about the fact that the Round-Up Ready crops now facing 11 (and counting) round up resistant weeds and now companies are working on 2,4-D ready crops. This is ecological insanity. Short term profits over long term health. Short term lower food prices for long term expensive health care issues.

Comment of Beth Caruso

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 10:22 a.m.

City, State: Windsor, CT

Occupation: Registered Nurse

Comment: I want to eat food that is free of pesticide that does not hurt bees or contaminate human water as a result. I want to eat food that is non-GMO. Right now I have to shop at an Asian market to get non-GMO soy. I want to give my family healthy food that does not hurt the environment or our bodies. Until there is a food bill that helps local communities and takes big corporations out of the loop I will be boycotting factory owned farms and Only buying at my local farmers markets or food from overseas that is non GMO. Get the point? Thanks for reading.

Sincerely,

Beth Caruso, a very concerned citizen.

Comment of Kate Casale

Date Submitted: Friday, May 11, 2012, 7:19 p.m.

City, State: Alameda, CA

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: After a decade of working in communities affected adversely by a food system that prioritizes corporations and profits over communities and health, I urge you to advocate for our well-being.

Specifically, I ask you to advocate for:

Full Funding for Programs that Strengthen Economic

Opportunities for Small and Mid-sized Farmers and Ranchers and Improve Consumer Access to Local, Healthy and Sustainable/Organic Food. These include rural economic development programs, Farmers Market Promotion Program, the Value-Added Producer Grant program, Organic Certification Cost-Share Program, equitable crop insurance for organic producers, and Beginning Farmer Development and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers loan programs. We urge you to reform the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program so that more funding goes to support healthy food access and local and sustainable food production and distribution. We also encourage innovations to better link urban and rural areas to maximize benefits for everyone.

Protecting and strengthening USDA food assistance programs that fight hunger and improve nutrition. We must ensure that the Federal deficit is not reduced at the expense of low-income Americans by reducing funding for SNAP/CalFresh, WIC and other major food programs.

Increasing Access to and Affordability of Healthy Food and Beverages in Underserved Communities. We urge you to support the Healthy Food Financing Initiative program, the Community Food Projects Grants Program, and incentives for healthy food and beverage purchases by clients of Federal food programs (including facilitating the use of SNAP, WIC and SSI benefits at farmers' markets, community supported agriculture and other direct marketing/delivery programs)

Healthier Diets for Children. It is vital to increase the percentage of fresh fruit and vegetable purchases in school food procurement programs and expand the Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program. The government should incorporate more local fresh fruit and vegetable purchases into the USDA Commodity Foods program and the Department of Defense's (DoD) Fresh program for school meals. Shifting to better food and beverages would not necessarily raise costs and would improve health.

Full Funding for Agriculture Conservation & Research and Extension Programs. Conservation, research and extension are crucial to helping farmers and ranchers protect soil resources, improve air quality and conserve water and wildlife habitat. Critical programs include the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Conservation Stewardship Program. We also urge you especially to support research focusing on whole-farm management systems, on-farm solutions, and infrastructure that strengthen ecologically sensitive, local and regional food production. Existing programs include ATTRA/The National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, Sustainable Agriculture Research Education, and the Organic Research and Extension Initiative.

Full Funding for Programs to Promote Healthier Diets for All Americans. Healthy diets are essential for happy lives and save billions of dollars in health-care costs. Dietary improvement programs run by USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, which oversees the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPlate, should be protected and expanded over time.

Please support efforts to define a new Food and Farm Bill in line with today's needs. In the last century, the farm bill successfully ensured an abundant supply of cheap but often lower-quality calories. In this century, it must support healthier diets, diverse and resilient farming systems, and economic revitalization to help eliminate hunger.

Thank you so much for your support.

Please take an opportunity to look at what young people are doing in their communities to make change at: (<http://www.rootedincommunity.org>) (<http://www.youthfoodbillofrights.com>).

Comment of Kim Casper

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:17 p.m.

City, State: Seattle, WA

Occupation: Writer

Comment: We do not inherit the Earth; we borrow it from our children. Let the Earth be happy, the way Nature intended; she knows best. These other ways of manipulating foods destroys health in two generations. Let us honor the wisdom of Nature/God and take her abundance the way it is offered.

Comment of Jen Cassels

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:00 p.m.

City, State: Bell Buckle, TN

Occupation: Teacher

Comment: Support small farmers and organic farming. Don't cut \$4 million from organic research funding and don't cut in half funding to support Beginning Farmers.

Comment of Tammy Casteel

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 12:52 p.m.

City, State: Independence, MO

Occupation: Homemaker

Comment: We need access to locally grown organic produce, nothing else affects our health as much as this subject. Please support local organic. Thank you.

Comment of John Castellini

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 5:27 p.m.

City, State: Tinton Falls, NJ

Occupation: Chiropractor

Comment: The ultimate source of all economies, including our own, is the land. The health of our bodies, of our communities, of our cultural and political institutions, of our nation and ultimately our planet are directly contingent upon our skilled and respectful use of this most precious and irreplaceable resource as well. We have confused exploitation with proper and ethical husbandry. Our policies have valued corporate profit over the well being of people and communities. If our children and grandchildren are to have a viable future, and given our current policies and farming methodologies this is seriously in doubt, we must, and soon, move from an industrial agriculture back to a local and human-scaled form of farming.

Comment of Julie Castillo

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 8:59 p.m.

City, State: Fort Bragg, CA

Producer/Non-producer: Producer

Type: Dry Beans & Peas, Field Crops, Fruits, Greenhouse/nursery, Vegetables

Size: Less than 50 acres

Comment: I am a garden educator in 2 elementary schools. I have a teaching credential and a bachelor degree in Horticulture. I have been working with kids and nutrition education for 15 years and have seen changes in eating habits due to our garden program in partnership with our food service. The changes are profound and extend to the family and the community. Please support funding that helps school meal programs provide fresh fruit and vegetables and whole grains. We are making change and it needs to continue for the sake of the next generation and those that follow.

Comment of K.A. Castle

Date Submitted: Sunday, May 20, 2012, 10:50 p.m.

City, State: Pitcairn, PA

Occupation: Warehouse Worker

Comment: I fully support small organic independent farmers and I feel there should be laws in place that protect both their livelihoods and their lands from big agri-businesses such as Monsanto who only care about making money and do not care about what they are doing to our planet or the human and animal species with their GMO crops and hazardous pesticides. I have a Right to be healthy and to choose healthy and Safe food options. This is your planet and your family too! It is time to wake up and protect us all!

Comment of Brian Castleforte

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 2:46 p.m.

City, State: Van Nuys, CA

Occupation: Graphic Designer

Comment: Mr. Sherman, please understand the gravity of our situation in regard to the food system as it now stands. We are in grave danger of so many current and potential problems with not only our health and our environment, but in the survival of our species on the whole. There is no more time for red tape BS. The time for action is now. I beg you to please stand up for what is right, to not be bullied by these deplorable corporate chemical producing killers, and do what's right. Please do the right thing and help save our food system before there is no return. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Respectfully,

Brian Castleforte.

Comment of Elizabeth Castner

Date Submitted: Wednesday, May 02, 2012, 2:49 p.m.

City, State: Piscataway, NJ

Occupation: Student

Comment: The current iteration of the farm bill has the potential to change agriculture and food markets in America to address many economic and social issues, but serious attention needs to be given to how funds are distributed and what regulations are put in place. For example, some organizations have suggested attaching conservation compliance to crop subsidies in order to make ecological concerns a central focus, which is important because of our uncertain environmental future and its impacts on farming.

The intention of the original farm bill was to provide financial security for America's farmers, which was what was needed at the time. Food has become available and affordable for many Americans, but external ecological costs and health concerns have resulted from the agricultural system we have today. Farmland needs to be conserved and protected so that we will be able to continue producing food in the future. Commodity crops receive the greatest subsidies, but contribute the most to nutrient-poor diets that are causing health problems in communities that can't afford healthier options. Providing subsidies for vegetable farmers would encourage accessibility of healthier crops.

I think re-structuring of subsidies and implementing regulations of food available in SNAP are important changes to be considered. The livelihoods of farmers and equitable accessibility of nutritious food should be supported as well.

Comment of Laura Castro

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 6:25 p.m.

City, State: Boone, IA

Occupation: Chemist

Comment: I am writing to ask the members of the House Agriculture Committee to support organic agriculture, and reject cutting research funds aimed at developing new and improved techniques to help us produce agricultural products in a way that is environmentally friendly, and sustainable. We as a nation must avoid recurring to agricultural practices that pollute the environment and degrade our natural resources.

We also need to have an improved farm subsidies system that doesn't put organic farmers at an unfair disadvantage. It would be wise to reduce the amount of money going to subsidize standard agricultural practices that don't yield healthy and nutritious food. The health of average Americans would benefit from reducing exposure to pesticide residues and genetically-modified crops that lack scientifically-sound safety studies, especially in light of scientific evidence that suggests otherwise.

Please lend your support to:

The full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286).

Fully funding conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs.

The implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236).

Maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Comment of Morgan Catalina

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:58 a.m.

City, State: Austin, GA

Occupation: Account Executive

Comment: We must consider the health of the nation over the benefit of large corporations for food security. We need diversification and to keep small American farms alive!

Comment of Anthony Catalino

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:54 p.m.

City, State: New York, NY

Occupation: Restaurant Manager

Comment: We need to know what is in our food. I'm amazed that our country allows the food we eat to have so much unnecessary crap in it, that no other country allows. It appears to me that there is something our government is missing! We need more nutrition classes so our kids and adults know what to eat!

Comment of Elizabeth Catrambone

Date Submitted: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 8:25 a.m.

City, State: Millersville, MD

Occupation: Stay-at-Home Mom

Comment: Please do not cut funding for organic farming. Organic produce and foods used to be a specialty market. That is no longer the case. Consumers now know the impact pesticides and hormones have on our health and the health of our children. There is much more demand now for pure-farmed, non-GMO foods, pushing organic into mainstream markets, despite our existing economic condition. Thank you so much for your continued hard work and unbiased consideration on matters affecting the health of our kids. Not much is more important.

Comment of Richard Caudill

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 11:10 p.m.

City, State: Campbell, CA

Occupation: Retired Semi-Working Senior

Comment: It is essential that we support local farmers and encourage organic methods that lead to sustainable farming. If corporations are allowed to control the quality of food products and distribution solely for profit then we must object. Our government is our last hope for justice.

Comment of Mark Causey

Date Submitted: Friday, May 11, 2012, 10:17 a.m.

City, State: Snellville, GA

Occupation: College Professor

Comment: Please ensure that the new farm bill has protections for small and midsize farmers, encourages and helps new and younger farmers to get started, and favors local, sustainable and organic agriculture. It should encourage and support farm to school programs as well as expanding the availability of fresh foods to under-served and economically challenged areas.

Comment of Lisa Cavender

Date Submitted: Friday, May 18, 2012, 4:16 p.m.

City, State: Hartford, AR

Occupation: Computer Services Technician, Fort Smith Public Library

Comment: I strongly urge the members of the House Agriculture Committee to reconsider the current farm bill as it stands before you now. In particular, I ask that you reconsider cutting \$4 million from organic research funding and also to reconsider cutting the funding to support Beginning Farmers by 1/2. I feel very strongly that both organic farming and small farmers are the way to strengthen our health, our communities and our country as it strongly relates to our country's food safety.

I also support the full endorsement of all provisions of the Local Foods, Farms and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286); full funding of conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, and making sure that enrollment in any new insurance subsidies are tied directly to compliance with conservation programs; the implementation of all provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (H.R. 3236); as well as maintaining the EQIP Organic Initiative.

Thank you for you time.

Yours in a healthy, organic future,

