

Committee on Agriculture
Member Day
Rep. Malinowski Testimony
December 11

[Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway], thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of my constituents in New Jersey's 7th district.

There are upwards of 10,000 farm operations in New Jersey and 750,000 acres of productive farmland. We are among the nation's leading producers of blueberries, cranberries, peaches, squash, cucumbers, peppers, and more.

We have a particularly dynamic and vibrant agricultural sector in the 7th district—our farms sold more than \$130 million worth of products in 2017 alone. And according to the Organic Trade Association, we have more organic operations in the 7th district than any other congressional district in the state.

We're truly lucky to have the farmers markets, vineyards, and family farms that we do—they are central to the character of our district and I'm proud to represent them here in Washington.

In August, I had the chance to visit with a number of these farmers and growers—to hear directly from them about their successes, their challenges, and about how we in Washington can be most helpful.

I was able to visit:

- Alstede Farms and the Stony Hill Farm Market in Chester;
- Ashley's Farms in Flanders;
- Snowbird Farms in Long Valley;
- Clucas Farms in Califon;
- The Beneduce Vineyard and Snyder Research and Extension Farm in Pittstown; and
- The Copper Creek Landscape and Nursery in Frenchtown.

Every farm is different and priorities can vary, but there were a few recurring themes I heard during my various visits.

- First and foremost, **on labor**, as you know, there is considerable frustration with the H-2A program as it's currently administered. Too few workers and an overly cumbersome application process are making it harder for our farmers to access the experienced labor they need. I'm pleased to see that the bipartisan Farm Workforce Modernization Act addresses several of the challenges identified by both farm and labor interests, and I look forward to voting in favor of this legislation later today.
- Next, **on trade**, our farmers don't want last-minute bailout checks from the government to stay afloat. They want to sell the products they've devoted their lives to growing. This Administration's habit of starting unilateral trade wars is putting America's farmers at risk, including the soybean growers in my district who have seen the China market dry up as a result of the President's 'shoot first, aim later' approach to negotiations. We need to expand market access for our farmers—the best in the world—not cut it off.
- And finally, **on climate**, unpredictable and extreme weather events pose grave risks to farmers' livelihoods. Last year was particularly wet in northern New Jersey, which led to significant crop

loss and other challenges for farmers and growers. We need bold action to confront climate change for a whole host of reasons—protecting our farmers' harvests is one of them.

I want to close by highlighting the important **farmland preservation work** happening throughout my district, including in Hunterdon County, where more than 400 farms have been preserved since 1985—more than in any other county in the state.

These farms provide fresh produce to local communities; they are popular tourist attractions for the region; and they are an integral part of the history and identity of this beautiful part of the state that I am privileged to represent.

Preservation prevents these farms from being lost forever—replaced by new development—and ensures that they can continue to contribute to the rural economy as they have for generations.

Hunterdon County is leading the way in the state when it comes to farmland preservation, and I commend them for their efforts. I look forward to working with members of this Committee to ensure that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, the county's federal partner in their preservation efforts, is well-funded into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to testify today and for all of your efforts to empower America's farmers to succeed. And thank you to the farmers and growers in my district who have shown themselves to be remarkably resilient amid challenging circumstances.