

**Baird Testimony**  
**House Ag Committee Member Day**  
**May 18, 2021, 10:00 AM**

Thank you, Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Thompson, and my colleagues for providing the opportunity to speak today. I am excited to sit before so many passionate and talented colleagues to share my vision and concerns for the direction of our esteemed panel.

As we've seen so far in the early days of the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, our Country faces many great challenges and our policy is being shaped by significant political forces on both sides of the aisle. Much as my beloved Hoosier state has long been seen as the Crossroads of America, I see plainly where our Committee stands as the crossroads of these important policy challenges.

That said, while I see great opportunity in the potential for agriculture and the broader whole of Rural America to effect impactful change on these challenges – I, at the present, find myself dismayed at the direction this Committee has taken in these early months. Many times, so far this year, I have found myself fearing that the storied tradition of bipartisanship that our Committee has long been known for has been jeopardized as we hold meeting after meeting on niche, partisan issues with partisan approaches. As we move forward with the remainder of this year and this Congress, it is my sincere hope that we will correct the course of our panel away from the spotlight of mainstream-partisan issues and refocus our attention on providing much needed leadership for Rural America, agricultural producers, and the critical importance of our nation's food systems.

The Administration, House and Senate Leadership, and even the leadership of this Committee have made clear that Climate Change mitigation is among the highest priorities for this Congress. This issue is the perfect example of a topic so easily corruptible by partisanship and political rancor, but with so much potential for our mission if approached responsibly. As we assuredly move forward in addressing this sensitive and timely topic, we must focus our efforts on developing real, impactful, and achievable solutions that encourage growth, and steer away from any options that create burden or reduced efficiency.

While there is real risk that climate change policy could create many challenges for the agricultural industry, if addressed correctly, it could instead offer tremendous opportunity with multiple beneficiaries. Our goal should be to establish turn-key solutions, incentivize participation, and unlock the potential for science to aid in increased sustainability.

We need to find and provide the tools that allow producers to work smarter, like improving rural connectivity that allows for increases in precision agriculture which leads to increased yields with reduced inputs like fertilizers, pesticides, water, and fossil fuels. We need to evaluate and retool our regulatory pathways to allow innovate products like feed additives that can reduce methane and other greenhouse gasses created by livestock. Adopt new

technologies like soy-methyl-ester sealants for roads and bridges that replace harmful petroleum products and double the life of concrete infrastructure – greatly reducing carbon emissions while providing demand for American Soybeans. We need to give credit to farmers and ranchers for the good work they already do to benefit our environment through good stewardship, conservation, and the greenhouse gasses they sequester through the growing cycle. We need to facilitate the adoption of tools like methane digestors like that used by Fair Oaks Farms in my district to turn animal and food waste into incredibly useful biogas that can be used for electricity and transportation fuels. And of course, we need to look for more opportunities both domestically and abroad to increase adoption of biofuels like ethanol – which a Harvard study recently reported offers a 46% reduction in greenhouse gasses over gasoline – all while rebuilding rural economies.

These are just a few examples of how to turn challenge into opportunity, but regardless of our pursuit of these or other solutions, it is my highest priority that whatever policies we adopt around this issue be producer focused, accessible, and not punitive.

Other key areas of importance for me this year include unwavering support of the critical safety-net programs that keep producers in business and our nation's food supply stable. Protecting the Commodity Credit Corporation from being commandeered by the Administration. Expanding access to foreign markets for our agricultural goods. Protecting our nation's biotech and scientific capabilities by stopping intellectual property theft and forced technology transfers to gain access to foreign markets like China. And shaping new regulatory pathways – allowing innovative new products to come to market and more accurately evaluating products already there.

As we move forward with our work this Congress, I look forward to offering my passion and expertise to help bring real solutions to the challenges facing our nation. I look forward working closely alongside each and every one of you as we work to serve America's farmers and ranchers, and the whole of Rural America.

With that Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Thank you,

**James R. Baird**  
Member of Congress