



House Agriculture Committee

Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities, Risk Management, and Credit

Producer Perspectives on the 2023 Farm Bill

April 26, 2023

Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Brown and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am Aaron Flansburg a farmer from Palouse, WA and current Chairman of the USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council. I am a 5th generation farmer in Eastern Washington. I am lucky to still work with my mom and dad. We raise pulse crops, wheat, barley, canola, alfalfa, and are working toward organic certification on part of my farm. On behalf of the USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and provide our perspectives on the 2023 Farm Bill.

The USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council represents the farmers, processors, exporters and food manufacturers of U.S. dry peas, lentils and chickpeas which are part of a larger family called pulse crops, also including dry beans. Pulses are nutrient dense, healthy, affordable, and agronomically and environmentally friendly. Pulses have a low water footprint and don't require much or any nitrogen fertilizers to be productive. They are one of the few crops that pull nitrogen from the air to help the plant grow. This makes pulses one of the most efficient sources of protein and lowest greenhouse gas emitters, per gram of protein produced, of any food source. Pulses are grown throughout the U.S., with production primarily in the northern tier states of Washington, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota. Dry peas, lentils and chickpeas are Title I program crops and these programs, along with crop insurance, are serving growers well, providing a safety net and the risk management needed to allow producers to get financing for their annual production costs.

We support the passage of a new farm bill and an increase in its budget baseline as an investment in food security at home and around the world.

As you write the next Farm Bill, we support continuation and enhancement of the Title I and Crop Insurance programs.

First and foremost, funding must be maintained for the federal crop insurance programs that provide essential risk management for farmers. Crop insurance plays a critical role in maintaining grower access to credit and the financial stability of my farm.

The current Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs should be continued with additional streamlining and flexibility. In place of the annual choice and sign-up for ARC and PLC, we support providing producers with the "better of" the two support programs for that year. This would remove a significant burden on producers that requires them to try to predict weather and markets and to get approvals from landlords. For many producers this is challenging and time consuming. This change could also reduce the workload on FSA

offices. For farms with landlords, the current ability to switch between the ARC and PLC programs is made burdensome by a requirement for each landowner to sign off on changes in enrollment. An allowance for farmers to use Power of Attorney to switch between options would alleviate these administrative difficulties and encourage flexibility as on-farm needs shift.

In addition, we believe that the crop insurance Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) should be available for both the PLC and ARC programs.

If Reference Prices are adjusted, the Reference Prices for dry peas, lentils, large chickpeas, and small chickpeas should be adjusted proportionately to other crops.

The current Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projections show prices declining significantly for all of the pulse crops from their current levels, however, the price declines are not projected to trigger support payments. There is a great concern that producers will suffer operational losses without triggering support intended from the Title I Farm Programs. We would point out that the current CBO price projections for dry peas, lentils and chickpeas seem to be low. The current prices in 2023 are significantly higher than CBO estimated for this year. Based on CBO's underestimation for 2023 and the historical average for pulse prices, we believe the CBO price projections over the next 5 to 10 years are low and that could impact the cost estimates for any changes to Reference Prices.

Our organization also represents U.S. fava bean producers. We request that fava beans be added to the list of crops exempt from the base acre reduction requirements when planting fruits and vegetables.

The USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council also supports a voluntary update to base acres.

Beyond crop insurance and Title I farm programs, the other Farm Bill Priorities for the pulse crop industry include:

Ag Research and the Pulse Crop Health Initiative - Transforming and maximizing food production requires a long-term investment in research and research infrastructure for all of agriculture. Historically, pulse crops have received very little federal research support despite being one of the most nutritious and environmentally efficient crops in the food system. We continue to work for increased appropriations for the Pulse Crop Health Initiative that was first authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill.

School Food Programs - We have been working to remove barriers to utilization of pulse products in school lunch programs. It has been a slow and difficult process, but we are making progress with recent USDA proposals to allow pulses to count toward certain category requirements. To help move forward faster, we urge Congress to increase the authorization for the School Pulse Crops Products Program (PCPP) to \$4 million per year.

MAP/FMD - Strong market promotion programs are critical to increasing the demand for our commodities around the world. The pulse industry supports doubling Market Access Program (MAP) funding from \$200 million to \$400 million and the Foreign Market Development

(FMD) program from \$34.5 million to \$69 million in the new Farm Bill.

Food Aid - The war in Ukraine has exacerbated food security concerns around the world and we support increased funding for the PL480, McGovern Dole and Section 32 food aid programs in the 2023 Farm Bill.

Rural Processor Disaster/Risk Management Tools - U.S. pulse processors have faced challenges due to natural disasters and supply chain and market disruptions. Like farmers, small processors need risk management programs to maintain employees and processing infrastructure during severe and prolonged disruptions. Our industry is seeking options, both private-sector and public, to help small processors survive unforeseen and prolonged disruptions to their operations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and provide perspectives on the 2023 Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

Aaron Flansburg
Chairman
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council