



Chairman Robert Aderholt

Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations

Full Committee Markup - FY 2016 Agriculture Appropriations Bill
July 8, 2015
Opening Statement As Prepared

Good morning. You have before you the FY 2016 appropriations bill and report for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies as reported by the Subcommittee on June 18. When the Subcommittee met, the bill passed by voice vote and with much praise for the bipartisan nature of the legislation.

I want to thank the Ranking Member for his cooperative spirit and all of his work, and that of his staff, to bring this bill to the Committee today. I also want to express my appreciation to all of our Subcommittee members for participating in our hearings, sharing their ideas and concerns, and helping to develop the bill. Of course, none of this would be happening without Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Lowey, and their commitment to a regular annual appropriations process.

The overall total for both discretionary and mandatory programs in this bill equals \$143.9 billion. This is \$3.2 billion below the President's request and \$3.8 billion below the FY 2015 enacted level. The bill includes \$20.65 billion in discretionary budget authority, which is \$175 million lower, (1 percent) than the fiscal year 2015 enacted level and \$1.1 billion below the President's budget request. The mandatory funds support USDA's farm, conservation, crop insurance, and nutrition programs.

When the Subcommittee began the FY 16 appropriation process, I asked my colleagues to keep in mind three guiding principles. They were: (1) Improving the Management of the Agencies and Programs within our Purview; (2) Targeting Funds to the Most Important Programs and Functions; and, (3) Promoting U.S. Agriculture, Free and Fair Markets, and Safe Food and Medicines. This basic framework helped us set priorities during the 11 budget and oversight hearings this year, which covered all of USDA's mission areas, as well as the Food and Drug Administration and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

The bill focuses investments in programs that bolster U.S. agriculture, support rural communities, maintain food and drug safety, ensure sound markets, and provide nutrition for children, families, and seniors at home and abroad. The bill also targets funding to national programs that have the most benefit to the American people and the U.S. economy, while reducing inefficient, wasteful, or lower-priority programs and agencies.

I would like to briefly mention a few highlights of the bill:

We provide a total of \$2.69 billion for agricultural research. We received wide backing from members and the public requesting support for the land-grant colleges and universities. We were able to provide targeted increases for a select number of research programs. In particular, we provide a total of \$335 million, a \$10 million increase over the FY15 enacted level, for the

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative – USDA’s premier competitive research grants program.

We provide \$871 million for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service – an increase of \$15 million above the President’s budget. This agency is on the frontline, working to eradicate plant and animal diseases and keep invasive pests out of the country.

Because of the work of Congressman Young and Members from districts like mine with poultry growers and processors – I’m pleased to say that we were able to increase funding for avian health in a couple of different areas. This bill also includes specific language which grants flexibility to USDA to use all resources to control and eradicate the devastating effects of highly pathogenic avian influenza.

One group that represents 95 percent of the eggs produced in this country, an industry suffering from the crisis, sent a letter thanking the subcommittee and this bill for its “herculean efforts to fund [facilities and programs]...critical to the future of the egg, egg products, and poultry industry...with the current outbreak of high path avian influenza in the U.S.”

Because of the efforts of Ranking Member Farr and Reps. Rooney and Valadao, I’m pleased we were able to increase funding to combat citrus greening disease. Thanks to these colleagues and others who showed interest in the bill, we were able to place special emphasis on a few of the other national priorities facing agriculture today.

The bill includes more than \$1 billion for the Food Safety and Inspection Service. This funding is the same as the FY 2016 budget request. It will maintain more than 8,000 inspectors at more than 6,400 meat, poultry, and egg product facilities across the country.

The bill provides an estimated \$1.5 billion for the Farm Service Agency and does not allow the closure of county offices. We also fully fund the various farm loan programs that will reach approximately 40,000 farmers and ranchers, including those just starting out for the first time. The bill also places controls on reining in out-of-control information technology investments.

For the Natural Resources Conservation Service, we provide \$840 million to help farmers, ranchers, and private forest land owners to conserve and protect their land, including \$6 million above the request for the watershed rehabilitation program.

As I noted in the Subcommittee markup, many of us come from rural districts. I know firsthand that rural parts of the country face unique challenges. As such, we provide a total of \$2.5 billion for rural development programs. This represents an increase of \$86 million above the FY2015 enacted level. We include funding to support \$920 million in business and industry loans, \$1.3 billion in loans for rural water and waste programs, and \$6.2 billion for rural electric and telephone infrastructure. We also provide \$1 billion for the single family direct loan program, \$1.2 billion for rental assistance, and approximately \$30 million for the Mutual and Self-Help program. At times, we have questioned USDA’s commitment to rural development programs when we see such cuts as those proposed for rural housing. However, there is strong support for them in the House. Thank you to all of you who expressed support.

As you know, this bill includes both discretionary and mandatory funding for USDA’s food and nutrition programs.

Specifically, it provides \$6.5 billion for the Women, Infants, and Children program. This is \$139 million below the FY 2015 enacted level and the budget request. However, the Committee has not decreased funding to simply save money. This number is reflective of decreased program participation. USDA’s Economic Research Service just issued a report that WIC participation

fell for the fourth consecutive year in 2014, with an average of 8.3 million participants per month. The report further states that, “Since peaking in fiscal year 2010, the number of participants has decreased by almost 10 percent.” USDA’s data continues to show declining participation rates since the average is 8.1 million for fiscal year 2015. Every person who is eligible for the program will receive benefits at this funding level.

The bill includes \$21.5 billion in required mandatory funding for child nutrition programs and \$81.7 billion for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP. This funding level helps almost 46 million Americans each month.

I also want to clarify that the bill provides full funding as requested for the Summer Food Service Program at \$536 million. The bill provides an additional \$12 million to continue the Summer EBT pilot program. I would emphasize that Summer EBT is a pilot program, and there is no cut to the traditional Summer Food Program. If the Summer EBT pilots have been successful, I hope USDA will work with the authorizing committees to establish a program rather than continue with pilot projects.

To support those in need in places like South Sudan, the Horn of Africa, and the Central African Republic, the bill provides \$1.6 billion for overseas food aid. As our Ranking Members noted at Subcommittee Markup, I’m pleased to report we were able to provide a \$17 million increase above the budget request for Food for Peace grants and maintain the level for the McGovern-Dole education and child nutrition program.

The Food and Drug Administration receives almost \$2.62 billion in discretionary funding in this bill. When the user fees are included, FDA will receive \$4.6 billion in FY 2016. Within the total, the Committee provides increases of \$41.5 million for food safety activities and \$4.2 million for medical product safety activities.

The bill provides \$250 million for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission and provides savings for out-of-control leasing costs. This level maintains the \$35 million increase the agency received last year and it represents an increase of 123 percent since the collapse of the Nation’s financial markets in 2008.

Finally, the bill zeroes out eight outdated programs.

The Subcommittee members worked very hard to incorporate the funding priorities of those on both sides of the aisle. Thank you for your attention and I ask for your full support of this bipartisan legislation. I look forward to reporting this bill to the House today.

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