

Opening Statement – Chairman Robert Aderholt
Food and Nutrition Service Oversight Hearing
March 14, 2013

Remarks As Prepared for Delivery

I want to welcome all of you to today's hearing. This morning we will examine USDA's Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services Mission Area. Our witness is Ms. Audrey Rowe, Administrator of the Food and Nutrition Service at USDA. Welcome, Ms. Rowe. We are certainly pleased to hear from you, but it is unfortunate that Under Secretary Concannon could not join us due to a management decision by the Department. When the Administration finally submits a budget for Fiscal Year 2014, we look forward to having the Under Secretary testify.

It is critical that we conduct oversight of USDA's nutrition programs since this Mission Area accounts for 77 percent of total resources in the Agriculture Appropriations Bill. In Fiscal Year 2012, the Federal government spent over \$106 billion to fund and operate the nutrition assistance programs.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, is a mandatory program; however, it is an appropriated entitlement program that receives its annual allocation through this bill. In Fiscal Year 2012, SNAP served an average of 46.6 million people per month. SNAP's program level totaled \$80.4 billion, as compared to \$40 billion in Fiscal Year 2008. This is a 100 percent increase in SNAP spending during President Obama's first term, and is indicative of the Nation's uncontrolled spending on the mandatory side. While the Administration claims that they are cracking down on fraud, waste and abuse in this program, there is wide agreement that much more needs to be done.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, or WIC, accounts for the single largest discretionary program in the bill. In Fiscal Year 2012, WIC's program level totaled \$6.9 billion and served an average of 8.9 million participants each month. This program has maintained a fairly high level of bipartisan support. But as this program continues to consume a larger share of the smaller discretionary budget, we need to ensure sufficient oversight at the Federal level as eligibility for the program has expanded, and States need to be monitored more carefully in their efforts to manage the program.

Child Nutrition Programs in total are expected to approach \$20 billion this year. The National School Lunch Program, serving over 31 million school children each day, had a Fiscal Year 2012 program level of \$11.6 billion. USDA has issued new school meal regulations as directed by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, and more proposed rules are underway. Despite some increased flexibility allowed in the program, we continue to hear of the challenges facing schools in implementing these new regulations.

We all agree USDA's food and nutrition programs were designed to provide a vital safety net to those in need. However, I am sure there will be disagreement amongst our members on how these programs are managed and operated on a daily basis. My goal is to ensure the integrity of these programs and make sure taxpayer dollars are spent as wisely as possible.

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