



Chairman Robert Aderholt

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

**FY 2016 Budget Hearing: Marketing and Regulatory Program Mission Area of USDA
March 3, 2015
Opening Statement As Prepared**

I am pleased to begin our review of the fiscal year 2016 budget request from the agencies of USDA's Marketing and Regulatory Program mission area. I would like to welcome to the Subcommittee Mr. Ed Avalos, USDA's Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs.

We also have joining us today Mr. Kevin Shea, Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS); Ms. Anne Alonzo, Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS); Mr. Larry Mitchell, Administrator, Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA); and Mr. Mike Young, USDA's Budget Director.

I have been emphasizing in previous hearings three goals for this Subcommittee as we move through the fiscal year 2016 appropriations process. The first goal is improving the management of the agencies and programs under our purview. We will be enhancing accountability in spending of taxpayer dollars through improved agency governance processes and internal controls, and ensuring transparent decision making. Inspector General Fong testified a few weeks ago before this Subcommittee. In her testimony she cited a lack of sufficient management controls to ensure that APHIS' Preclearance Offshore Program was operating effectively. This program helps protect U.S. agriculture from foreign pests and diseases and it is imperative that you address the report recommendations.

The second goal is to target funds to the most important programs and functions. Likewise, we must continue to reduce or eliminate funding for lower priorities and those programs that are less effective or duplicative. This mission area has a broad spectrum of responsibilities that directly impact our domestic and international agricultural products and markets, and we will continue to support them. However, you are requesting additional funds for several initiatives that may be at the detriment of critical and successful programs. For example, in your mission area I think there is a missing component, such as a long-term strategic infrastructure plan, that is crucial to moving products domestically in order to expand trade and marketing opportunities. USDA has

been reacting to market disruptions like those at the ports and railways instead of having a proactive plan in place.

The third goal is to promote U.S. agriculture, free and fair markets, and safe food. Your mission area facilitates the marketing of agricultural products domestically and around the world, works to remove non-tariff barriers in trade and to open, retain, and expand export markets, and addresses agricultural threats to safeguard animal and plant health. We provided additional funding to APHIS in recent years to address significant agricultural threats. We are appreciative of your work with the private sector to address citrus greening and emerging swine health issues. I am also pleased the Department acted quickly to follow Congressional direction by rescinding the provisions regarding certain GIPSA regulations as outlined in Section 731 of the FY 2015 Omnibus, and halting activities to establish a second duplicative beef checkoff program as directed in the Omnibus Explanatory Statement.

USDA is requesting a total of \$987 million in discretionary resources in FY 2016 for the mission area, a decrease of \$12.5 million from the 2015 enacted level. However, all three agencies are requesting increases for enhancing current activities or supporting new initiatives. I will be looking for evidence that current efforts are effective and I would like to know what industry and public support exists for the expanded efforts.

I am particularly concerned that USDA has requested scarce discretionary resources for lower priorities. For example, APHIS has requested an increase to enhance implementation of the Lacey Act provisions. I have trouble supporting such an increase at the expense of higher priority and more effective animal and plant health programs, many of which the agency has proposed to decrease.

With the overall spending caps still in effect, I anticipate that the Subcommittee's funding levels will remain relatively flat at best. We have tough allocation decisions to make and again, I want to be sure that we maintain funding for the most critical and successful programs.

Today and in the coming months, we expect to have an ongoing dialogue with your agencies in order to develop a fair and responsible budget for the next fiscal year.

###