



# **Chairman Robert Aderholt**

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

**FY 2017 Budget Hearing  
USDA Research, Education, and Economics Mission Area  
March 16, 2016  
Opening Statement As Prepared**

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Thank you for joining us to discuss USDA's fiscal year 2017 budget request for USDA's Research, Education, and Economics mission area. I would like to welcome back Dr. Cathy Wotecki, Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics and Chief Scientist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. We also have joining us today Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young, Administrator of the Agricultural Research Service; Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy, Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture; Dr. Mary Bohman, Administrator of the Economic Research Service; Mr. Joe Reilly, Administrator of the National Agricultural Statistics Service; and Mr. Mike Young, Director, Office of Budget and Policy Analysis.

As I have mentioned in previous hearings, I have established four primary goals for this Subcommittee as we progress through the fiscal year 2017 appropriations process. First, increasing oversight, efficiency, and the need for effective outcomes. Second, keeping rural America vibrant. Third, supporting American farmers, ranchers and producers. And fourth, protecting the health of people, plants and animals. We will be reviewing USDA's research request with these themes in mind.

On behalf of the Subcommittee, I would like to thank all of you and your staff for your work in agricultural research. The importance of the work performed by USDA's Research, Education, and Economics mission area cannot be overstated. The effort and funds invested in agricultural research have the potential to produce positive results now and into the future – increases in livestock and crop yields, reduction or elimination of loss due to disease and insects, improvements in food quality, increases to farmers' profits, and protection for the environment. USDA's research has and will continue to affect the lives of every American, every day.

Last year, Congress approved the highest ever funding level for agricultural research at USDA – a total of \$2.94 billion. For fiscal year 2017, USDA is proposing a \$2.90 billion discretionary request, a reduction of \$38 million from the 2016 enacted level for research programs. This includes a \$6 million increase for the Economic Research Service, or ERS; an \$8 million increase for the National Agricultural Statistics Service, or NASS; an \$18 million increase for the Agricultural Research Service, or ARS; a \$117 million reduction for ARS Buildings and Facilities; and a \$47 million increase for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, or NIFA.

While the Subcommittee appreciates the responsible approach you have taken to funding most programs for fiscal year 2017, we cannot allow new, untested programs to begin at the expense of proven, effective research programs.

For example, you propose to terminate 14 research programs within NIFA, but to begin a Home Visits for Remote Areas Program, which will cost \$20 million. There are already two programs at HHS that serve this purpose – the Health Resources and Services Administration’s Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program and the Administration for Children and Families’ Tribal Home Visiting Program. In addition to both HHS programs, USDA also has a \$68 million program called the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program or EFNEP in every state and territory serving the same populations. It is this Subcommittee’s responsibility to ensure that USDA is effectively administering its programs and meeting the Nation’s needs in agricultural research.

The budget also proposes a ‘strategic investment’ for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, or AFRI. In addition to the \$375 million requested in discretionary funding for AFRI, USDA requests \$325 million in mandatory funding for AFRI. This irresponsible budget gimmick artificially reduces the discretionary request for research and disregards the debt crisis facing our nation. I look forward to hearing more about the rationale behind this request today.

Lastly, we will revisit the U.S. Meat and Animal Research Center in Clay Center, Nebraska. I am sure you are all too familiar with the New York Times article from January 2015 regarding the allegations of animal neglect and abuse. While the situation at MARC does not seem to be nearly as dire today as portrayed in the Times article, USDA has more work to do in order for Congress to release the remaining funds available to ARS. So far the agency has been less than fully cooperative. In addition, we expect to hear from our witnesses on the status of the Investigator General’s investigation including how ARS is working with the IG and what changes the Department has made as a result of the New York Times article, its own internal investigation, and its work with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

As always, we will do our best to address the highest priority needs in agricultural research.

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