

Agriculture Appropriations Member Day - Testimony
Representative Earl Blumenauer
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671 words

Thank you, Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Bishop. I

appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

As you well know, food and farm policy is critical to our nation's success. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is the only agency in the federal government that can build a community from the ground up, tackling issues like housing and infrastructure as well as most problems facing America's farms and ranches. In a time of tight budget resources, it is important that we direct money to the people and activities that need the most support.

Over the past two years, I have traveled across my state of Oregon, talking with thousands of people about how food and farm resources

should be allocated. I'd like to share some of those ideas with you today because I think they resonate not just in Oregon, but across the country. With these ideas, you could get a head start on efforts to save taxpayer's money, help more farmers and ranchers, and promote healthy food, a better environment, and animal welfare, while bringing Americans together.

First, we should invest more in conservation, which benefits many farmers and ranchers as well as the environment, the general public, people who hunt and fish, and more. With these investments, we can create multiple benefits, while putting money in the pockets of farmers and ranchers.

Second, investing in innovation and research has exponential benefits for farmers and ranchers, the agriculture industry, and the public. By supporting farmers to invest in practices that are more sustainable, and

better geared towards resilience, we can help farmers adapt to a changing climate and help our country retain its edge in the global marketplace.

For example, the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program is vitally important in terms of exploring themes from the benefits of cover crops to the carbon sequestration properties of the soil. It should be funded at an even higher level.

Third, we should invest in beginning, small, and medium-sized farmers. Our country needs to do more to help farmers enter the marketplace, which is why I urge you to provide as much funding as possible for the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged, Veteran Farmers and Ranchers program, also known as the 2501 Program.

You can combat many farmers' worry about consolidation and the disappearance of the American small farm by funding the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program to bring more farmers into the fold. Many of these beginning farmers want to be more sustainable, and at the same time growers across the country understand that organic agriculture is the future for many markets. Support for the National Organic Program, the Organic Transition Program, and organic research would help more farmers gain access to these markets, and would help young people interested in agriculture policy come around.

Additionally, the Value-Added Producer Grant Program goes great lengths in helping agricultural producers add value to the goods they farm. Whether it's marionberry growers in Oregon, or bakers in Alabama, this program has done great work and should be funded at the highest possible level.

And finally, it is so important that we provide nutritious and affordable food to those who need it most. The Emergency Food Assistance Program, also known as TEFAP, is vital for many low-income Americans, and we cannot leave them behind. Supporting this program at the highest possible funding level would bring rural and urban America together, and would provide assistance to help our fellow Americans get back on their feet in a time of need. We must continue to support the safety net, and TEFAP provides emergency food and nutrition assistance at no cost for those who need it most.

These are just a few of things that the Appropriations can do to help steer our nation's food and farm policy in the right direction. I encourage you to take these considerations seriously. And to travel across your states, thinking about how food and farm policy could truly best work for your constituents. Thank you for your time and your consideration.