

Testimony of Congressman Roger Marshall before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies

- March 9, 2017 -

Good morning, Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member Bishop and Members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to share a few thoughts about the FY 2018 Agricultural Appropriations Bill.

Agriculture is the backbone of my district, representing a full 60% of the district's economy, which makes matters pertaining to agricultural policy paramount, especially when we consider the scope of the downturn in commodity prices that is driving farm revenue to multi-decade lows.

Consider that in the latest year we have data for - 2015 Kansas net farm income averaged less than \$6,000 per farm. We already know that 2016 will be lower yet, and all indications point to 2017 continuing to fall. Can you imagine trying to raise a family on less than \$6,000 a year?

With that broad agricultural economic outlook in mind, I ask that your committee first take the medical profession approach of "first, do no harm." As America's farmers and ranchers ride out these difficult financial times, the worst thing Congress could do is weaken the safety net they are counting on.

Beyond the traditional safety net programs, access to credit is a key need that your committee can ensure remains viable. The FSA guaranteed and operating loan programs help provide certainty and liquidity for growers as they face these challenging times.

I also ask that your committee take a long view as we think about how to ensure American agriculture remains viable and competitive into the future. Agricultural research investments, particularly through the National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) are key to developing tomorrow's genetics, production methods and end uses.

While NIFA is a small portion of the overall budget, they have an outsized impact and fund research infrastructure and critical projects in areas that matter to my district including plant and animal health, biosecurity and nutrition.

Of particular interest within NIFA are the Hatch Act funds that match state dollars to fund our research experiment stations, Smith Lever Act funds that match state dollars to fund our Cooperative Extension Service and the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), which provides competitive grants to researchers across the country. An increase to the overall NIFA budget would allow expansion of these programs and build a foundation for the future of our agricultural industry.

Thank you for your consideration of these items and for your continued support of American agriculture.