



Chairman Robert Aderholt

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

Fiscal Year 2018 Agriculture Appropriations Bill – Subcommittee Markup

June 28, 2017

Opening Statement As Prepared

You have before you this morning the Chairman's mark for the fiscal year 2018 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

The Subcommittee's discretionary allocation is \$20.001 billion and this bill was written to that level. When adjusting for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, the discretionary spending in this bill is \$1.1 billion below the fiscal year 2017 enacted level.

When the Subcommittee began the fiscal year 2018 appropriation process, I asked my colleagues to keep in mind four guiding principles. They are: (1) evaluate and account for taxpayer dollars to ensure effectiveness and accountability; (2) invest in rural infrastructure as a catalyst for growth; (3) ensure support for farmers, ranchers, and producers; and (4) protect the health and safety of people, plants, and animals. These four principles guided us from the first review of the President's budget request to the content of the bill in front of you. This basic framework helped us set priorities during the six budget and oversight hearings we held this year.

These principles also assisted us in providing context when we began to consider over 5,300 bill and report requests submitted by 358 members. These requests covered every aspect of our bill and highlighted the importance of and impact that the programs under this Subcommittee's jurisdiction have on the everyday lives of all Americans. We have tried to address these requests in a bipartisan manner by providing programmatic funding or by including language in the bill or report in accordance with House rules.

The reality remains that, as a country, we need to get our financial house in order and find the means to address our ever growing deficit. However, this bill is not in full agreement with some of the budget proposals to defund parts of the Rural Development mission area or food aid programs. Acknowledging a shared responsibility to find savings, this bill was thoughtfully crafted providing needed resources that will continue to support rural America. This bill reflects my commitment to that - only five accounts in the bill received an increase over last year while the majority received significant reductions. These cuts have been targeted to prioritize resources and maximize savings.

The bill supports America's farmers and ranchers, who are vital to our Nation's economy and our health and well-being. We are blessed with such a diverse and plentiful food supply that is

made possible in part through programs in this bill, which assist farmers and ranchers across the country. We continue to help others around the world who face starvation and malnutrition. We support research and development in agriculture to improve productivity and stability. We support the oversight of commodity markets, providing confidence for businesses, traders, investors, and the public. This bill provides funding for all of USDA's nutrition programs at levels that ensure all eligible participants will receive the assistance they need. We are fortunate that as a Nation we can support these vital programs.

There are a few issues I would like to highlight this morning. First, this bill includes critical funding for Rural Development programs. I, like many of you on the Committee, come from a rural district. Despite a difficult allocation and proposals in the President's budget to eliminate or drastically reduce funding for certain Rural Development programs, this bill includes funding for critical rural development programs including the water and wastewater loan and grant programs, several housing programs including section 502 direct loans for low-income buyers that were proposed for elimination, and resources for programs operated by the Rural Business Cooperative Service. Resources have also been provided to ensure all Rental Assistance contracts that serve very low income residents will be renewed as well.

Second, this bill provides \$2.8 billion to continue addressing critical research issues affecting agriculture, which will not only ensure our nation has a stable and abundant food supply but also maintains our country's competitiveness in the global marketplace. We do not support the proposed closure of 17 research facilities included in the budget request, but direct USDA to prioritize research activities and reallocate vital research dollars from research efforts that have matured or where the objectives of the research have been met. The bill also provides continued investment in ARS buildings and facilities consistent with the ARS' Capital Investment Strategy.

Third, the bill provides targeted increases for animal and plant pests and diseases. In particular, we have maintained funding to help address the devastating effects of citrus greening as well as the crisis in the poultry industry as a result of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza.

The bill provides funding for the new Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs and the Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation. The \$1.6 billion for Farm Production and Conservation mission area ensures that local county Farm Service Agency offices will be fully staffed and farm loan programs meet current estimates of demand.

The Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs mission area, something I have supported since it was first proposed in the 2014 Farm Bill, receives \$1.8 billion in funding to promote U.S. agricultural exports, removes barriers to trade, and provides U.S. commodities to those in need overseas through the Food for Peace and McGovern-Dole International Food for Education programs.

The bill also provides \$248 million for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, a slight reduction compared to last year. This reduction is in line with nearly every agency in the bill, and the Commission was not exempted. This decrease is targeted towards the growth in overhead and administrative staffing levels, which have increased in the past few years while the overall level

of employees has decreased. Resources for the Office of Chief Economist, Enforcement, and Market Oversight functions have been prioritized to ensure safe and sound financial markets.

The bill provides a nearly \$2.8 billion direct appropriation for the Food and Drug Administration to assist the FDA in protecting and promoting public health. The bill does not accept the proposed user fee recalibration. The bill continues to support the food safety activities associated with the Food Safety Modernization Act, including the funds provided in the base. This Subcommittee has provided approximately \$300 million for food safety since 2011. Also, we have provided funding for USDA's extension service to serve as the sole educator at the farm level on FSMA regulations instead of FDA officials. This bill also provides \$60 million in new funds from the 21st Century Cures legislation. Lastly, user fees are expected to increase by over \$490 million over fiscal year 2017.

The bill also includes several policy and oversight provisions to assist the new administration in peeling back the over-regulation of the last eight years. This includes a provision that requires the FDA to address tobacco products, including flavors and advertising targeted towards young children.

In closing, I ask for your support of the bill.

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