

Chair Castor, Ranking Member Graves, and members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak about the challenges and opportunities for American farmers in the midst of our climate crisis. As a 5th generation Iowa farmer, member of multiple farm organizations, and the executive director of Iowa Interfaith Power and Light, an organization working to help Iowans find and implement faith-based solutions to climate change, it's a tremendous honor and great responsibility to testify on behalf of American farmers.

A partial solution to the global climate crisis is right in front of us--we just have to have the courage to embrace it. This solution to rising CO2 levels will also help us clean our water and air, save our soils, and stabilize our food system and rural economies. That solution is to pay farmers for environmental services they render in building soil health and sequestering carbon. Doing so will revolutionize both agricultural and environmental policy. Unlike the current configuration, these policies should no longer be in opposition--they should complement each other in strategic ways. Costs will be pennies per meal for the short term--but actually, it isn't a cost at all. It's an investment. It's an investment in our children and grandchildren's future.

We must start believing in American farmers. We can solve global warming by unleashing the power of American farmers to solve problems. It's what we do on a daily basis. Regardless what we're producing on our own farms, we're all managing complex systems. We survive because we're masters at solving problems. The question today isn't "do you believe in climate change." The question is do you believe in American farmers and their ability to innovate when confronted with major challenges?

This committee is answering that question with a profound yes! By the very nature of including agriculture in this hearing, it's clear this committee wants to start investing in and empowering American farmers.

On American farms, being more resilient to extreme weather and mitigating global warming by reducing greenhouse gas pollution and capturing carbon, can be the same thing, two sides of the same coin. Paying farmers to capture carbon, to develop carbon farming, is an effective way to slow climate change and make our farms more resilient to increasingly extreme weather.

Carbon farming can increase productivity, build soil, improve air and water quality, and increase economic opportunities in our rural communities. This committee can help American farmers lead on climate action and to work with us to develop the incentives that reward us when we do.

At Iowa Interfaith Power and Light, we're gathering farmers in church basements to talk about how their faith calls them to embrace climate action on their farms. These farmers, mostly conventional commodity and livestock farmers, are ready to act on climate change. They point out the current combination of public policy and markets creates a situation where farmers investing in better conservation and environmental stewardship carry a greater burden of risk than farmers who are willing to shortchange long term stewardship for short term profit. Despite these current distorted policy and market signals, and contrary to conventional wisdom, we're proving more and more farmers are ready to help solve this climate crisis. We farmers recognize that like our parents and grandparents before us, we must innovate on our farms to provide what the world demands.

Last century, the population bomb was one of the greatest challenges facing humanity. American farmers led the revolution that helped solve this problem. Our parents and grandparents innovated and

partnered with researchers and agri-business to unleash increased productivity that not only delivered enough food, but lowered the cost of that food. The Green Revolution not only prevented a global disaster, it unleashed global growth that dramatically increased the quality and length of human life touching every corner of the world.

We're at a similar, pivotal moment in human history. We are facing a catastrophic crisis; the greatest crisis humans have ever faced. American farmers can again lead the world through this crisis and into a future that is even more abundant than our past. We have a mountain of scientific research, powerful technological tools, and pioneering and innovative farmers across the country already starting to manage their farms to not only produce the goods the world demands, but to provide the environmental services this crisis requires.

There are no silver bullets for adapting to or mitigating climate change. American farmers understand complex systems and how to produce multiple benefits. We're ready to embrace the call to innovate on our farms to not only capture carbon and reduce emissions but to also increase productivity, build soil, improve air and water quality, and increase economic opportunities in our rural communities. What's missing is the call for our leadership and an investment in our innovation. That's what this committee can do. Call American farmers to lead on climate action and to work with us to develop the incentives that reward us when we do. If American farmers are going to lead the next agricultural revolution, we must partner with the rest of America to leverage smart public policy and develop effective markets to reward innovation on our farms.

As a committee, here are some ways you can help farmers and rural Americans lead the next agricultural revolution.

Work with farmers to develop smart public policy for farmer and market led climate action. American farmers are at our best when we yoke smart public policy with the power of capitalism. As the world begins to put a price on carbon, let's make sure American farmers can claim some of the value of what we do on our farms when providing climate change mitigation services.

Embrace the opportunities climate action holds for rural development. One of the greatest strengths of American agriculture is that it's still made up of families managing small businesses. One reason American agriculture can move faster and more effectively than agriculture in some other parts of the world, is that the vast majority of land is still owned by individual Americans. Help unleash the power of capitalism to reward these entrepreneurs for developing the small businesses that can help defeat the climate crisis. Every farmer and every rural landowner in every state in the country can potentially benefit from helping solve the climate crisis. Rural America is where energy is generated and agricultural products are grown. That won't change as we transition into a clean energy economy. Let's make sure we empower farmers and rural Americans to reap the rewards as we make this transition.

Rethink the politics of climate action. If resources remain focused on the politics, we all lose. But if we encourage farmers and rural Americans to bring the very best Democratic ideas and the very best Republican ideas together, our rural communities will be more resilient to extreme weather and can hold onto the value of capturing carbon. Everyone says we need bipartisan solutions. Incentivizing farmers and rural communities to lead on climate action is an opportunity to make that happen.

The things farmers need to do to adapt to extreme weather are the very same things they need to do to develop carbon farming to help mitigate the climate crisis. The world has a limited time for climate action. America has to invest in expedient and cost-effective efforts to reduce emissions and capture carbon. Investing in American farmers is hands down one of the fastest and most effective ways for climate action. No other group of Americans is more threatened by climate change than farmers and at the same time more capable of providing solutions to help solve this climate crisis. We need your courage, and your leadership to fashion climate legislation that includes a robust section to pay farmers for performance-based agriculture and ecosystem services. American farmers, rural communities, our country, and the entire world is depending on your leadership.