

TESTIMONY OF KENT SWISHER
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“Select Committee on the Climate Crisis hearing entitled “Climate Smart from Farm to Fork: Building an Affordable and Resilient Food Supply Chain”

Good morning Chairwoman Castor, Ranking Member Graves and members of the Select Committee. I am Kent Swisher, President & CEO of the North American Renderers Association (NARA). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss pathways to create a sustainable food system that is resilient in the face of climate change.

NARA is the trade association representing the interests of the rendering industry in the United States and Canada. NARA’s 32 member companies operate 178 rendering plants and represent over 95 percent of North American production. The industry includes independent renderers, many of which are multi-generation family-owned companies, as well as integrated packer-renderers that process only their own animal by-products.

The rendering industry accounts for \$10 billion in U.S. economic activity and employs tens of thousands of people across the country in full-time jobs with benefits. Rendering is unique among agricultural industries with operations in rural and urban communities. Rendering is the cooking and drying of meat and/or other animal by-products not used for human consumption.

Renderers are often referred to as the original recyclers. For centuries, the U.S. rendering industry has enabled society to follow this wise advice: “Nothing should go to waste.” Renderers are a major force in ensuring a clean and healthy environment, upcycling the things we do not want to or cannot eat – animal bones, fat, or hides – into sustainable, usable, and higher-value new products for farmers, consumers, and industrial uses.

The U.S. rendering industry is essential to the reduction of carbon emissions into the atmosphere. Americans consider only about 50-60 percent of an animal edible, which means the other 40-50 percent is deemed inedible. Instead of wasting about half of the meat we farm and buy, rendering reclaims these unwanted “leftovers” in huge volumes and upcycles them into ingredients for countless new products — recycling 99 percent of this unwanted meat.

I would like to make three key points in my testimony today.

First, the rendering industry is an essential pathway in creating a sustainable food system. Each year, renderers recycle a huge volume - more than 56 billion pounds - of meat and bone leftovers from livestock and poultry farming, meat processing, supermarkets, meat lockers, and restaurants. Rendering also saves cropland. More than 13.6 million additional acres would

have to be planted to make up for the protein and energy (fats/oils) deficit that would result without rendered ingredients used in pet food, biofuels, and livestock feed.

Rendering prevents alternative disposal methods which lead to unnecessary greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In fact, an average rendering plant sequesters 5 times more greenhouse gas emissions from the environment than it emits. If not for rendering, the nationwide capacity of available landfill space would be full in *only* four years. And if by-products were disposed of in landfills, during decomposition they would emit large volumes of greenhouse gases detrimental to air quality and runoff could threaten surface water quality.

Rendering is an important and critical part of the solution to reducing food waste — and one that many do not know of or talk about when having the sustainability conversation. It's a solution that directly addresses food waste worldwide by finding practical uses for a wide range of meat products, used oil, and other food materials consumers consider inedible. Rendering recycles and reuses this material to create nutritious pet food, animal and aquaculture feed, biodiesel, and countless other useful products — making rendering one of the most sustainable ways to reduce food waste. By reclaiming and upcycling otherwise discarded meat leftovers, renderers make our food production footprint smaller.

Second, renderers recycle billions of pounds of used cooking oil from food items like french fries into biodiesel, renewable diesel, and other essential ingredients. The rendering industry contributes to reduction of carbon emissions by providing a large volume of its recycled ingredients as feedstock to produce biodiesel and renewable diesel. Used cooking oil reclaimed by renderers provides 18 percent of biodiesel feedstock and rendered animal fats, 13 percent. Biodiesel and renewable diesel are important to reduce carbon emissions in the transportation sector. Biodiesel's feedstocks supplied by rendering have very low lifecycle carbon emissions. In 2010, EPA concluded that biomass-based diesel produced from used cooking oil and other recycled waste greases reduced lifecycle GHG emission by 86 percent compared to average 2005 petroleum emissions.

Finally, renderers have been collecting and repurposing these animal by-products for decades. Using technology-intensive controls running high temperature cookers, centrifuges, and presses, renderers transform this leftover material into valuable new products, i.e., high quality animal proteins and fats. These products are used extensively as ingredients in food for livestock, poultry, aquaculture, and family pets. Rendered proteins and fats provide essential nutrients and energy to keep animal agriculture and pets healthy and growing. In addition, rendered protein meals are a source of calcium and phosphorous, which can be used in animal feeds and organic fertilizer, helping reduce the reliance on imported fertilizer. Consumers need and use other products made from rendered proteins and fats, such as soaps, paints, varnishes, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, crayons, textiles, lubricants, rubber products, plastics, agricultural fertilizers, and even explosives and fireworks. Renderers are early adopters of a resilient, bio-based solution to reclaim and upcycle food waste. We are an essential element to the Select

Committee's goal of achieving substantial and permanent reductions in pollution and other activities that contribute to the climate crisis.

NARA supports a level playing field among recyclers to prevent unfair market advantage and unequal competition for animal by-products. Renderers understand the need to fairly compete for raw material inputs but not against companies receiving government financial incentives providing them with added advantage. Federal support should not divert leftover meat, bones, other animal by-products from traditional renderers to other recyclers.

Moreover, the livestock, poultry and pet food industries need the essential protein and nutrients provided by rendered animal proteins. Renderers want to be able continue supplying these important customers with an ample and competitively-priced supply of animal feed and pet food.

In closing, NARA looks forward to being a part of the discussion as your committee considers future legislative initiatives. We would appreciate your recognition of the important role of rendering in sustainability and reducing carbon emissions. The rendering industry respectfully recommends that any legislative effort adequately recognize the early leaders in GHG reduction in order to avoid unintended consequences in the future.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before the Committee today and discuss the role of rendering in ensuring the U.S. has a sustainable, climate-smart food supply chain, and I look forward to your questions.