

**Response of Ea'mon O'Toole  
Director, Board of Directors  
Family Farm Alliance  
Savery, Wyoming**

**To**

**Question for the Record from the Hearing Entitled "Fix Our Forests for Affordable and  
Reliable Water and Power Supplies"  
January 8, 2026**

**Healthy forests are necessary for environmental stewardship and ecosystem protection on many levels. To keep a forest healthy, we need to manage them through active, structured harvesting, and early control of stand density. The expansion and updating of sawmills and wood processing facilities requires financing, and there is an option that our government has been working on through a pilot programs called the Timber Production Expansion Program (TPEP).TPEP is the USDA's primary tool for expanding milling and processing capacity by providing federally backed loan guarantees to support the establishment, reopening, expansion, and modernization of sawmills. Unfortunately, TPEP expires at the end of this fiscal year. Would the panelists make comment on this program?**

Thank you for the question Congressman Ezell. The Family Farm Alliance agrees that a ensuring that industry has the capacity to offtake harvested material and put it to beneficial use is an important component of a sustainable effort to restore and maintain healthy forests. The federal government has an important role in supporting that effort through programs like TPEP, along with the USDA Wood Innovations Grant Program and others. This is especially important in many western forests where low value timber persists. In addition to ensuring communities have the industrial base to process timber from restoration projects and other forests treatments, USDA programs focused on mills and other facilities to utilize forest material are also important to revitalize rural economies and communities that have been devastated by loss of jobs in the forest products industry over recent decades.