



Opening Statement of Environment Subcommittee Chairman Scott Franklin

Environment Subcommittee Hearing
Innovations in Agrichemicals: AI's Hidden Formula Driving Efficiency
May 20, 2025

Good morning and thank you to our witnesses for being with us today. This morning's hearing topic on agrichemical innovations is very important to me, as my district is home to over 200 specialty crops, including most of Florida's citrus operations. I represent the largest agricultural district east of the Mississippi River, where access to safe and effective agrichemicals like pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides is essential to keeping our crops healthy and productive.

Today, we are discussing the current and emerging AI-driven scientific and technological advancements in agrichemicals. We will explore how artificial intelligence is transforming the industry by enhancing key functions such as research and development, testing, production, compliance, safety, reviews, and applications.

In Fiscal Year 2024, I secured \$4.5 million dollars in federal funding for the Center for Applied Artificial Intelligence at the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Gulf Coast Research and Education Center. The Center will serve as a hub for statewide agricultural AI initiatives and demonstrations, with a strong focus on pest management. In my district, citrus greening has devastated growers and weakened the backbone of Florida's agricultural economy. The research conducted by the institute and other academic partners, like the ones represented here today, is critical to our discussion. These efforts are not only advancing pest management, but may also lead to the breakthroughs we need in agrichemical technology to finally cure the disease that's killing Florida citrus.

Additionally, EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin recently announced much-needed changes to address the backlog of over 504 new chemical reviews and 12,000 pesticide reviews that are well past the expected timelines under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) and statutory timelines under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). As part of Administrator Zeldin's Powering the Great American Comeback Initiative, advancing American leadership in artificial intelligence is a central pillar, with a focus on supporting AI development through clean energy to position the United States as the global leader in AI. I believe this hearing will demonstrate what's possible with AI in the agrichemical review space and inform policymaking as EPA continues to develop its AI plan.

I am eager to hear each witness's testimony today and look forward to working with committee members to ensure the United States maintains global leadership in AI-driven scientific and technological agricultural advancements.