

Testimony of Adam Brown  
Member, Illinois Farm Bureau  
To the House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture  
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Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Thompson, and other members of the committee, I want to begin by thanking you for everything this committee has done to help America's farmers and ranchers get through such a difficult time. The Farm Economy has bent, but not broken, through volatile commodity prices, a pandemic, and now a resulting supply chain and inflation crisis that are driving up input prices for production and increasing the costs of goods across the economy.

My name is Adam Brown. I'm a sixth-generation family farmer from Central Illinois, where I raise 1,100 acres of corn and soybeans on some of the blackest soil in the world. Our ancestors broke sod in the 1860s to provide for their family who had pioneered west from New Hampshire. The land proved to provide great food, a home and way of life for the family. The

care and conservation of that land began then, has persisted through multiple generations and continues today.

At the end of 2017, my grandpa passed away as I was in the process of buying my uncle's share and preparing to buy my dad's share in the operation. Cashflow and debt loads were strained by the passing of my grandpa, as I would need to purchase several hundred acres from the many heirs of my grandparents' estate. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Direct Farm Ownership Joint Financing Loan program was a solid fit for this transaction, as my lender Farm Credit Illinois also had stellar young, beginning, and small farm real estate offerings to make the 50%-50% split a workable solution for my situation.

Still, to get through the cash crunch, I had to rely on participation in other USDA programs like the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and FSA's Marketing Assistance Loan program. After the successful acquisition of the other heirs' portions of my grandparents' estate, I had to change the

formation of my business from a partnership to a sole proprietorship, which resulted in changes to USDA paperwork. The unwillingness of NRCS to review my application to CSP because of an administrative paperwork error remains a singular source of frustration and speaks to the inefficiencies of government that can oftentimes prevent new and beginning farmers from gaining access to the programs they need to stay afloat until they have gotten their feet under them. After a year of being forced to the sidelines, however, I finally requalified for the Conservation program. And as a result, I expanded my use of no-till practices – and for the first time – created a pollinator habitat and utilized cover crops on my farm.

Government programs certainly can't make up for every cash flow problem a farmer may face. Tight margins over the last few years have forced us to find ways to tighten our budget to make ends meet, including the liquidation of non-essential farm equipment. The most painful sale being that of the first tractor that my dad ever rode on: a 1950 Ferguson Ford T20, which brought in \$1,480. And while that was a difficult and emotional step to take, the survival of my farm for the next generation is

my top priority, just like it was for the generation that passed it on to me. Even those tough business decisions were not enough. I still needed some help to keep things running, and the loan programs that were available for Young, Beginning and Underserved producers came through for me in one of the most difficult and stressful times of my life.

I have found ways to pay it forward as I served on the most recent USDA Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers where I led a workgroup dedicated to providing recommendations to USDA for improvements to existing programs on behalf of New and Beginning Farmers and Ranchers. These recommendations included access to capital, access to land, tools for transition, information and customer service, as well as a revised and aligned definition of a beginning farmer and rancher.

According to FSA, there has been no carryover of approved, unfunded loans since Fiscal Year 2018. Therefore, heading into discussions for the next Farm Bill, the focus should be on ensuring that everyone that potentially qualifies for a loan under

the program has equal access to it, and that both the Farm Operating and Farm Ownership loan limits are keeping pace with the rising costs of farm equipment and real estate.

I thank you for the opportunity to share my story with you today, and I look forward to any questions you may have.

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