

Testimony of Representative Ashley Hinson
Iowa's 2nd Congressional District
United States House of Representatives, Committee on Agriculture
Member Day Hearing

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Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Scott, and Members of the Committee, thank you for hosting today's hearing to highlight some of the most important issues facing American farmers, ranchers, and rural communities.

Expanding USDA Conservation Programs

As we prepare to reauthorize the Farm Bill, I encourage the Committee to improve USDA's existing slate of conservation programs to address current needs of American agriculture. Conservation practices can improve resiliency against stressors like drought while preserving soil and water quality. I've recently introduced several bipartisan pieces of legislation to improve existing USDA conservation programs.

My Flood Resiliency and Land Stewardship Act would elevate flooding and drought as natural resource concerns under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. This bill will ensure that flooding and drought remain a long-term focus of the program to improve American farmers' ability to withstand environmental threats.

I also encourage the Committee to consider efforts to address regional conservation issues like those that affect the Driftless Region on the Upper Mississippi River. The Driftless Region's unique topography and position on the Upper Mississippi leaves it exposed to erosion and water quality issues. Building on USDA's previous efforts through Driftless Landscape Conservation Initiative will ensure that my constituents in the Driftless Region have access to voluntary tools to preserve their natural resources.

Technology is another important tool for farmers to manage pests and make more efficient use of inputs. Unfortunately, many precision agriculture tools can be cost-prohibitive, especially for small farmers. My bipartisan PRECISE Act modifies existing USDA programs like EQIP, CSP, and the Conservation Loan Program to help small farmers access these technologies.

Preserving Access to Interstate Commerce

I also encourage the Committee to advance a Farm Bill that preserves market access for American producers. The Supreme Court's recent decision to uphold California's animal housing mandate, known Proposition 12, has the potential to disrupt the free movement of goods across state lines and poses a serious threat to family farms across the country. A 2019 study from the University of Minnesota found that it would cost farmers nearly \$3500 per sow to renovate operations to comply with California's arbitrary standards.

This isn't just a number; these mandates are already having a real-world impact.

Since the Supreme Court's decision, I've traveled throughout Iowa hearing from farmers who are concerned about the impacts of mandates like Prop 12 and Massachusetts' Question 3. Melissa, a farmer from my district, says that Prop 12, and legislation like it, creates uncertainty in her decision making on her family farm. She shared that regulations like Prop 12 will drive consolidation and provide her and her family with fewer options to source and market their pigs, while driving up the price of food for her family. Trish, a farmer from Buchanan County, shared that the transition to Prop 12 housing would cost her family farm between \$3 million and \$4 million.

Following the Supreme Court's decision, I introduced the Ending Agricultural Trade Suppression Act to preserve interstate commerce and protect Iowa livestock producers from arbitrary mandates like California's Proposition 12. The EATS Act preserves California's right to regulate agricultural practices within its own borders while also protecting Iowa farmers' access to interstate commerce.

To the activists who think we need more government on our farms, I invite you to join me on a farm in Iowa to see the work that farmers are doing to care for their animals and the environment.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Committee to build consensus around a durable and bipartisan solution to protect Iowa family farmers from damaging and arbitrary mandates like Prop 12.

Closing

I'd like to thank the Chairman and Members of the Committee for providing the opportunity to testify today. By bringing forward a Farm Bill that improves and expands USDA's voluntary conservation programs, protects interstate commerce, strengthens risk management tools, and expands access to new foreign markets, Congress can support American farmers in their work to feed and fuel the world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.