

House Agriculture Committee – Member Day Testimony Congressman Dan Newhouse (WA-04)

Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Scott, Members of the Committee,

As Chairman of the Congressional Western Caucus, a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, and as a third-generation farmer representing Central Washington, it is a privilege to work with the Members of this distinguished Committee.

As we continue to address rural policy issues and support our farmers, ranchers, and the agriculture industry, I appreciate the opportunity to testify today and want to highlight several important provisions as you develop the next Farm Bill.

The Farm Bill impacts all Americans, and this legislation must be carefully crafted to promote American agriculture, preserve our premiere research institutions, improve forest health to prevent catastrophic wildfires, and provide a safety net to ensure the long-term success of America's agriculture industry.

[TRADE]

Trade continues to be critical for American farmers and ranchers, and American agricultural products are a key part of the global food supply.

The Farm Bill must ensure that agricultural exports are prioritized in market promotion and that U.S. food aid continues to support American producers.

It should reauthorize, and consider expanding, the Market Access Program (MAP), which is the main export promotion program that helps producers increase exports of American agricultural products.

Additionally, the Foreign Market Development Program (FMD), the Emerging Markets Program, and Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops all play an important role in establishing new international markets for American products in foreign countries.

My bill, H.R. 648, the Agriculture Export Promotion Act of 2023 would expand and extend the MAP and FMD programs to ensure that American farmers and ranchers have the support they need to grow their businesses.

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[ORGANIC]

My district is home to a significant number of organic growers and I am concerned by the lack of urgency and collaboration from USDA in updating organic standards.

Consumer trust in organics relies on strong and consistently updated voluntary standards that reflect the latest facts on environmental and ecological data, consumer demands, and innovative best practices.

To address this issue, I, along with others on this Committee and with overwhelming support from organic growers, introduced H.R. 5973, the Continuous Improvement and Accountability in Organic Standards Act.

This legislation establishes a five-year repeating process where USDA, its advisory board, and stakeholders work together to ensure evolving market data is included in modern organics practices.

[EPA]

For farmers, land managers, and other users not in the organic space, the ability to produce abundant food, feed, and fiber relies on access to safe and effective pesticides. However, some states have begun to regulate pesticides in a manner counter to the decades of scientific guidance from the EPA.

The lack of certainty on EPA-approved, science-based labels will erode access to current and future pesticides. It will threaten crops, grower incomes, conservation practices, public health, vital infrastructure, and ultimately raise food prices for families amidst record-high inflation.

My friend, and the distinguished Representative from South Dakota, Dusty Johnson, introduced H.R. 4288, the Agricultural Labeling Uniformity Act, to reaffirm federal pesticide labeling uniformity and prevent state and local governments from adopting inconsistent labeling or packaging that disrupts access to these vital tools.

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Growers and users need assurance that while states have authority to regulate pesticides within their jurisdiction, they cannot impose labeling or packaging requirements in addition or different from the scientific conclusions of the EPA.

[CLOSING]

In closing, the pursuit of a healthy farm economy must be a top priority, and it is crucial to protect those that keep food on our shelves.

I encourage urgency as you continue to develop the next Farm Bill, and I sincerely thank you for your time and consideration.