



Statement to the House Agriculture Committee

Livestock Subcommittee

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Submitted by:

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Good morning. I am Lorenda Overman. My husband Harrell and I are owners of Overman Farms located in Wayne County, North Carolina, also the home of Seymour Johnson Air Force Base. We are a multi-generational farm which directly supports four families and has a broader economic impact in our community. My husband is a sixth generation farmer. He and I have farmed hogs and row crops for more than 38 years, and we have welcomed the return of two of our three children and their families to our operation.

Our family farm is diversified with 4,000 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat and 3 hog farms. On our hog farm side, we have a nursery-to-finish farm with 7,500 head. Our sow farm has 2,000 sows and our wean to finish farm holds 14,000 head. Our sons also run over 200 brood cows on about 400 acres of hay.

Let me set the stage for today's testimony: North Carolina farmers have endured back-to-back-to-back hurricanes and unprecedented flooding. Our farms were severely impacted by several major storms and the

subsequent flooding. Even with risk management tools along with state and federal disaster payments, the financial and emotional impacts have been extremely difficult to manage.

In order to manage the loss of income and stay current with our operating and long term loans, my husband and I had to sell our timber to cover our financial obligations. In addition, we had to take loans against our life insurance policies in order to help with operating capital. We have found that commercial banks are now afraid of farmers and it is increasingly difficult to find partners willing to finance farming operations. The Farm Credit System has been vital to farmers in our area.

While the timing of recent trade agreement negotiations could have been better for North Carolina's farmers, we strongly support the Administration's efforts to make these agreements work better for America's farmers. Foreign trade has become the lifeblood for much of North Carolina's farm production. North Carolina's total 2019 Ag

exports were valued at \$2.7 billion dollars. Our total farm gate income was \$11.1 billion dollars in 2018. Exports account for almost a quarter of our state's farm gate income. Fair agreements will determine our future existence. We are grateful for the recent progress that has been made with China and we encourage the Administration to stay the course in ensuring China lives up to its obligations under these agreements. Additionally, we are grateful for passage of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade agreement which will provide certainty for our industry moving forward.

The hog farm side of my operation is somewhat insulated from low market demand because my integrator has processing capacity. Many hog farmers in our area are not as fortunate and have lost contracts with smaller integrators due to the price pressure on the supply chain. The row crop side of our operation is hurting from years of low prices. In 2019, and again in 2020, we were not able to balance our projected budgets with the market prices – even projecting bumper crops. If

USDA had not issued Market Facilitation Program payments, we would have ended 2019 in the red.

Here is the bottom line: Farmers need EVERY USDA and US Department of Labor program that Congress has authorized to be well-funded, well-staffed, and operating at peak efficiency. We need a guest worker program that works for all of agriculture. We need this body to closely monitor trade agreements with participating nations to see that their commitments to purchase are honored. Finally and importantly, we need to open new markets in Great Britain, the European Union, and anywhere else there are hungry people needing to eat the safest, freshest and most affordable food produced anywhere in the world.

Thank you for allowing me to share today.