



HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE
CLIMATE CRISIS

Opening Statement of Chair Kathy Castor
Hearing on “Climate Smart from Farm to Fork:
Building an Affordable and Resilient Food Supply Chain”
July 15, 2022

As prepared for delivery

Scorching temperatures and widespread disasters are putting lives at risk and harming communities across America. This week, families in Southwest Virginia were the latest to face deadly floods like those that swept through Yellowstone National Park a few weeks ago. At the same time, there is too little water across much of the West, leading to frequent wildfires and dangerously-low river and lake levels. In Texas, scorching hot temperatures almost stretched the grid to its limit, forcing families and industry alike to conserve electricity or risk a potential blackout. And Europe is facing what could be its worst heat wave in over 200 years. So it was disappointing to learn that Sen. Manchin is joining Republicans in rejecting investments to address this crisis: investments that would reduce our dependence on expensive fossil fuels while helping us create jobs and cut dangerous heat-trapping pollution. The American people have consistently supported cleaner, cheaper energy like wind and solar. So while this is a disappointing setback, we must move forward and use all the tools we have to solve the climate crisis. The costs of inaction are too high. Climate injustice is too great. And young peoples’ futures are too precious.

The climate crisis is also challenging our ability to put food on supermarket shelves and dining room tables across America. According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, major disasters left \$12.5 billion in damages to crops and rangelands just last year. In North Dakota, persistent drought damaged over 2.4 billion dollars’ worth of wheat, soybeans, corn, and other crops. Texas lost about \$2 billion in the aftermath of a winter storm, a hurricane, and other disasters. And extreme weather in California led to the loss of about half a billion dollars’ worth of fruit and nut crops. These impacts will worsen if we don’t address them – and their costs will be passed on to consumers.

That’s why Congress must invest in a climate-smart food system that lowers costs, increases food security, and incorporates solutions from farm to fork. Every person along the food chain – from producers to consumers and everyone in between – can make our food supply chain more sustainable. And each step in the supply chain presents an opportunity for innovations. That includes updating laws around food donation and labelling; strengthening sustainable school lunch programs; and increasing technical assistance for producers. It also includes supporting urban agriculture; improving food distribution at the local level; and working to reduce food waste and loss.

Many of these solutions can have an immediate impact. We can cut methane pollution by reducing food waste. We can drive down methane emissions from livestock by expanding the use of innovative feed additives like seaweed. And we can help farmers adopt proper regenerative grazing techniques that help the soil sequester more carbon. Moving quickly on these solutions will be crucial as we clean up the food supply system, which makes up nearly 30% of global heat-trapping pollution. And it will help us make progress on reducing biodiversity loss, deforestation, degraded soils, desertification, and water scarcity.

With the support of President Biden, we've taken steps in the right direction. The American Rescue Plan law included \$3.6 billion to enhance food distribution, expand local and regional food systems, and support historically disadvantaged farmers. We also made progress through this year's government funding legislation, which invested in initiatives like the Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Program and Farm to School grants. Finally, the Biden-Harris Administration just announced a new framework to shore up the food supply chain, leveraging more than \$2 billion in investments that will reduce pollution and make nutritious food more affordable for families.

As we move closer to a net-zero economy, we have an opportunity to create a food system that works for all Americans – ensuring access to safe, healthy food for generations to come. I look forward to today's discussion.