

**Testimony of Agriculture Committee
Chairman Frank D. Lucas
House Administration Hearing on Committee Budgets
March 6, 2013**

Madame Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today. I appreciate Ranking Member Collin Peterson joining me to outline our Committee's proposed budget for the next year. As you all know, we have a long and proud history of bipartisan cooperation, and I plan to continue that spirit of cooperation as we proceed with the work of the Committee in the 113th Congress.

In addition to bipartisanship, the Agriculture Committee has a strong history of fiscal responsibility. The modest spending and cooperative nature of our Committee spans back more than two decades, under the control of both parties.

With the impending expiration authorizations of both the 2008 Farm Bill and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), we have a significant workload ahead of us this Congress. Therefore, we are proposing level funding for the Committee for the 113th Congress. The resources provided to us will allow us to write both of these comprehensive pieces of legislation, as well as proceed with a robust oversight agenda as outlined in our oversight plan submitted to you earlier this year.

With the significant cuts in the 112th Congress, we were unable to fill four positions on our Committee due to budget uncertainty. In addition to those four open slots, we are now down another five staff people – a press person, an investigator, and three policy advisors. We have not filled these positions because we do not know what budget cuts to expect for this year and this Congress. This equals a 28 percent reduction in our staff if we do not fill these open positions.

In response to this budget uncertainty, we have consolidated positions and have eliminated subcommittee staff directors. Unfortunately, this puts our subcommittee chairmen at a disadvantage as this Committee has always been able to provide at least one staff person to serve each of the subcommittee chairmen. We also reduced the number of subcommittees at the Committee from six subcommittees to five subcommittees. Finally, we have done very little travel and limited our field hearings. We are doing everything possible to work more efficiently and effectively.

The Committee will continue to support leadership in implementing an additional 11 percent cut if sequestration takes place. However, I am concerned about the long term impact on the Committee to fulfill its responsibilities, as well as being able to retain qualified, experienced staff. In order to implement this level of cuts, we will have to continue to make conservative staffing decisions. This will hinder our ability to have an aggressive oversight hearing agenda. Additionally, we will have to continue to limit the number of field hearings and site visits that we would like to do.

However, if your Committee allocates a 5 percent increase over our actual spending in 2012, then we should be able to maintain our current staffing levels and hire four additional staff members. While we would still be short handed under this scenario, we can certainly make it work.

Madame Chair, we truly have our work cut out for us this Congress. But we firmly believe that we can accomplish all of this given our current resources. We greatly appreciate your consideration of our budget request. Please let us know if we can provide you any additional information.