

**Senator Jerry Moran Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies**

**Committee Markup of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration
and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2017**

May 19, 2016

(As prepared for delivery)

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am pleased to report the 2017 Appropriations Bill for Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA and Related Agencies for Full Committee consideration.

I want to thank all of the members of this Committee for their help. In particular, I'd like to thank Senator Merkley. He and I are new to our respective positions on this subcommittee, and I appreciate the partnership we have developed in crafting this bill.

I am proud of the bill that we are reporting today. It is written to our allocation of \$21.25 billion, which is \$250 million below the current enacted level. We have worked hard to invest these taxpayer dollars responsibly, funding programs that provide direct benefits to our farmers and rural communities and supporting programs that provide direct health and safety benefits to all Americans.

I won't go over every account in the bill, but I do want to point out a few highlights.

This bill provides strategic and important investments in rural America, including:

- \$150 million for Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations, a program that hasn't been funded since fiscal year 2010;
- water and waste loans and grants of more than \$1.75 billion to help communities obtain clean water and sanitary waste disposal systems;
- \$995 million in business loans to generate new jobs and increase incomes in rural communities;
- \$900 million for low-income housing loans, providing 7,500 rural families the opportunity to own a home; and
- \$1.4 billion for rental housing agreements.

The bill also directly supports our nation's farmers, by including funding:

- to support \$3.5 billion in farm ownership loans,
- to provide \$2.892 billion in farm operating loans, as well as
- to waive farm loan application fees for veteran farmers and ranchers.

For nutrition, the bill provides \$6.35 billion for the WIC program, and fully funds participation. It also fully funds the budget request for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and the Emergency Food Assistance Program.

This bill includes \$1.6 billion for the PL 480 Food for Peace Program, which is \$250 million above President's request. Funding for the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition program is maintained at \$201.626 million – including \$10 million dedicated to local and regional procurement in support of school feeding programs.

Research is prioritized in this bill, with the Agricultural Research Service salaries and expenses receiving \$1.178 billion, which is a \$34 million increase above the FY 2016 enacted level. This funding allows USDA to continue making critical investments in agricultural research throughout the country.

The bill provides \$1.364 billion for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, which is \$37.25 million above the FY2016 enacted level. This amount increases funding for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative by \$25 million to a total of \$375 million, the highest funding level since the program was created.

The bill provides \$1.033 billion for the Food Safety and Inspection Service, which includes full funding for all federal, state and international inspection services.

In the area of public health, the bill provides \$2.759 billion for the Food and Drug Administration, which is \$39 million above fiscal year 2016. This includes increases of \$40 million for implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act and \$11.9 million for improvements to medical product safety.

Finally, the bill includes funding for an issue of great importance to me: creating pipelines for our country's military veterans to explore career opportunities in production agriculture. The bill provides \$5 million for the Office of the Secretary for veteran outreach initiatives and \$2.5 million for the Food and Agriculture Resilience Program for Military Veterans – or FARM-Vets program. We owe it to our men and women in uniform returning home from service for the Department of Agriculture to play a significant role in exploring these transitional opportunities for our nation's veterans – from agribusiness training to the behavioral therapeutic benefits of agriculture

Overall, some difficult decisions had to be made, but I believe this a well-balanced bill that allocates funds where they are needed most. Before closing, I would like to thank Senator Merkley's staff – Jessica Schulken, Dianne Nellor, and Bob Ross – for their work throughout this process. They have worked closely with my staff, and I appreciate their efforts in getting us to this moment.

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