

**Chairman John Hoeven Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food
and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies**

**Markup of the FY2019 Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill**

May 22, 2018

(As prepared for delivery)

Good morning. Today this Subcommittee meets to report the fiscal year 2019 appropriations bill for Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA and related agencies. I am pleased to report this bill, and I want to thank all of the members of this Subcommittee for their help.

In particular, I'd like to thank our Ranking Member, Senator Merkley. I appreciate our partnership and the close working relationship of our staffs. I would like to thank both him and his staff for their outstanding work throughout this process.

The bill we will be recommending today is written to our allocation of \$23.235 billion, which is \$225 million above last year's enacted level for programs in the subcommittee's jurisdiction. I believe we are recommending a solid bill that addresses critical needs and maintains proper oversight. The bill reflects careful consideration of agriculture and Food and Drug Administration priorities and is a prime example that those priorities can be met on a bipartisan basis.

The investments made in this bill reaffirm our commitment to being at the forefront of production agriculture and provide our rural communities the ability to compete – both here and abroad.

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

The bill places significant emphasis on agricultural research conducted by the Agricultural Research Service and our land grant and non-land-grant university system through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Total research funding is \$2.73 billion –including \$405 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative. The bill also rejects the proposed termination of research projects and ARS laboratory closures.

The bill directly supports our nation's farmers and ranchers. \$4.25 billion in farm ownership loans and \$3.49 billion in farm operating loans are provided. The bill also prohibits closure of any FSA county offices.

For conservation, the bill protects our rural communities and natural resources by providing needed support for watershed projects. The bill provides \$774 million for technical assistance

for landowners and the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations program is funded at \$150 million.

For nutrition, the bill provides \$6.15 billion for the WIC program, which fully funds estimated participation. It also fully funds the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and the Emergency Food Assistance Program.

The bill includes \$1.7 billion for the PL 480 Food for Peace Program. It also provides \$210.25 million for the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program.

The bill prioritizes funding for rural infrastructure by providing additional one-time funding of \$425 million for rural broadband and \$400 for rural water and wastewater.

The bill provides \$2.97 billion for the FDA, including targeted increases to support medical product and food safety initiatives. Of particular note is an additional \$59 million to the FDA to support opioid prevention activities.

Overall, I believe we have achieved a balanced approach with this bill. I would now like to ask Senator Merkley for any remarks he may have, and then I will ask him to make the motion for adoption of the bill and report so that we can proceed to consideration by the Full Committee.

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