

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

**Markup of the FY2018 Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill**

July 18, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

Good morning. Today this Subcommittee meets to report the 2018 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 also 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 \$20.525 billion, which is \$352 million below last year's enacted level. Despite a minor funding reduction, I believe we are recommending a solid, bipartisan bill that addresses critical needs and maintains proper oversight. The bill reflects careful consideration of ag and Food and Drug Administration priorities and is a prime example that those priorities can be met while maintaining fiscal discipline.

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. This bill also maintains increases from fiscal year 2017 in areas of food safety and public health that directly benefit consumers and touch the lives of every American, every day.

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 ag research conducted by the Ag Research Service and our land grant and non-land-grant university system through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Total research funding is \$2.55 billion –including \$375 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. Technical assistance for landowners is

funded at \$769 million and Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations program is funded at \$150 million.

- For nutrition, the bill provides \$6.35 billion for the WIC program, and fully funds participation. It also fully funds the budget request levels for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and the Emergency Food Assistance Program.
- The bill includes \$1.6 billion for the PL 480 Food for Peace Program. It also includes \$15 million for local and regional procurement through the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program.
- The bill provides \$2.6 billion for the Food and Drug Administration, which fully supports food safety activities and appropriates \$60 million as authorized in the 21st Century Cures Act.

Overall, I believe we have achieved a balanced approach with the 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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