

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

**Hearing to review to Review the FY2017 Budget Request & Budget Justification
for the U.S. Department of Agriculture**

March 9, 2016

(As prepared for delivery)

This hearing will come to order. Good afternoon. The purpose of today's hearing is to discuss the Department of Agriculture's fiscal year 2017 budget request.

Secretary Vilsack, Dr. Johansson, and Mr. Young – thank you for being here today.

Agriculture supports more than 16 million jobs nationwide and forms the backbone of our rural communities. However, as you well know, our nation's farmers and ranchers have faced a drastic downturn in commodity prices and falling revenues. From 2013 to 2015, net farm income fell by a staggering 54 percent.

In times like these, it is critical that our nation's safety net for farmers and ranchers performs well and allows them to continue to grow and raise the safest, most affordable, and abundant food supply in the world.

I'm disappointed that once again the president's budget proposes massive cuts to the crop insurance program – even after the grassroots effort by so many last fall successfully reversed a reduction that pales in comparison to the proposals in this year's budget request.

As the subcommittee works to craft this year's appropriations bill, my priorities will focus toward supporting agriculture producers and rural communities. Keeping a strong safety net intact will be one of those priorities.

I look forward to discussing these issues and others at today's hearing. I would now like to turn to our Ranking Member, Senator Merkley, for his opening statement.

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