

Chairman Jack Kingston
Hearing on USDA's FY 2013 Budget Proposal – Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services
February 28, 2012
Chairman's Opening Statement- AS PREPARED

The Subcommittee will come to order.

I want to thank the members of the Agriculture Subcommittee for everyone's participation when we had the Secretary of Agriculture before us. Over the four hour span from start to finish, we covered a wide array of agricultural and rural development issues. In all, we had a productive dialogue. I hope this sets the tone for the remaining ten hearings. The hearing this morning gives us our first chance to dig a bit deeper into USDA's budget request.

In particular, the Subcommittee will examine the FY 2013 budget request for USDA's Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services Mission Area. By far, this Mission Area accounts for the greatest percentage – 85 percent of total resources in this Bill. On the discretionary side, WIC accounts for the single largest spending program – over \$7 billion in the request.

I want to welcome Mr. Kevin Concannon, USDA's Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services; Ms. Audrey Rowe, Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service; Dr. Rajen Anand, Director of the Center on Nutrition Policy and Promotion; and, Mr. Mike Young, USDA's Budget Director.

The FY 2013 President's Budget for the Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services Mission Area seeks a funding level of \$109 billion. I want to remind everyone from USDA that when you were sitting here last year at this time, you were asking for a total of \$100 billion for these same accounts. This FY 2013 request equates to a 9.3 billion increase over the FY 2012 increase or a 9.3 percent increase and \$19.5 billion increase over the amount we appropriated in the FY 2011 Continuing Resolution last April. While we had to revise our appropriation last summer to account for the Administration's revised estimate of need in the SNAP program, this percentage increase is indicative of the Nation's uncontrolled spending on the mandatory side.

Regardless of our political differences, one thing most of us can agree upon is that USDA's food and nutrition programs were designed to provide a vital safety net to the poorest and neediest in this country. From SNAP (serving 46.3 million) to WIC (9 million) to the National School Lunch Program (32 million), Congress created these and the other nutrition assistance programs for a cross section of the population and for the most part, to supplement diets. In addition, most of these programs are supposed to provide participants with support on a temporary basis. However, members of this subcommittee and elsewhere in Congress have disagreements on how effectively some of these programs are managed and operated on a regular basis. Some of the things that we will delve into today

include the issues of fraud, waste, improper payments, and regulations in a few major programs. I will close my comments by saying that while these highly publicized cases of fraud and abuse may not be indicative of the many valuable benefits provided by these programs, Congress will insist that USDA become better stewards of hard earned tax payer dollars.

Before I recognize you for your opening statement, I would like to ask the ranking member of the subcommittee, the distinguished gentleman from California, Mr. Farr, for any opening remarks that he may have.

Thank you, Mr. Farr.

PROCEDURE

Subcommittee members, we will proceed with this hearing under a “five minute rule”. Members will be recognized for five minutes, in the order of seniority at the dais at the beginning of the hearing and then in order of appearance – alternating between the majority and the minority.

We may have several rounds of questioning to allow everyone ample time to question our witnesses. There are two other appropriations hearings taking place right now and so some of our Members may be coming and going throughout our hearing today.

I would also ask that if anyone in the room has any electronic device that is set to ring, please set it to mute or turn it off. If our proceedings are interrupted, you will be asked to leave.

Mr. Concannon, your entire written testimony will be included in the record without objection, and I will recognize you now for your oral statement, and then we will proceed with questions.