

Chairman Robert Aderholt
Hearing on USDA's FY 2014 Budget Request
April 16, 2013
Remarks as Prepared

Today we begin our review of USDA's fiscal year 2014 budget request. I want to welcome Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Chief Economist Dr. Joe Glauber, and Mike Young, USDA's Budget Director to the subcommittee.

The strength of American agriculture continues to be in our network of domestic and international partnerships, producers in rural communities, research scientists looking for ways to increase production while protecting the environment, and exporters seeking out markets. This system allows for less than 2 percent of our population to produce safe, wholesome, and affordable food for our Nation and much of the world. Agricultural exports continue to be a bright spot in our trade balance as projected fiscal year 2013 exports are forecast at a record \$142 billion while imports are forecast at \$112.5 billion resulting in a \$29.5 billion trade surplus. Every member should be aware that this subcommittee provides the funding for the agencies – Research, Foreign Ag Service, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Food Safety Inspection Service, among others – that play an important role in keeping American agriculture safe and competitive. More importantly, we have to thank the American taxpayers who entrust us with using their tax dollars in the most efficient way possible.

Turning to USDA's budget request, at first glance, it would appear to be straightforward. In fact, the Secretary's testimony says that the request is approximately \$109 million below the 2013 enacted level. However, if you look a little deeper you will see increases in every major area of the Department compared to the enacted levels in the FY 13 Continuing Appropriations Act. All told, there are some \$1.3 billion in increases that are largely offset by a proposal to cut \$1.4 billion from agriculture programs and move them to international development assistance programs. It's a risky proposition to pay for increases based on a proposal that at least 21 senators are on record opposing, including the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman and Ranking Member, the Ag Authorizing

Committee Chair and Ranking Member, and the Full Committee Chair on Appropriations.

Secondly, the budget includes proposals to eliminate direct payments to farmers, modify the Conservation Reserve Program, and change the crop insurance program. While these proposals may or may not have merit, they do have to go through the authorizing committees. One of the things that the authorizing committees agreed on last year, on a bicameral and bipartisan basis, as they were developing their respective versions of the farm bill was to reduce spending on SNAP. The Senate bill had a \$4 billion reduction that passed the Democratic- controlled body, and the House bill had a \$16 billion reduction that passed the full committee. Yet your budget proposes to maintain the increase that was provided in the Recovery Act at an additional cost of \$2.3 billion. There just seems to be a disconnect here.

Finally, I look at the President's overall request and find that it is paid for by an additional \$1.1 trillion in new taxes, and never balances. In a sense, this whole proposal really does fit the axiom, "dead on arrival."

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