

STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG
ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES
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Chairman Hoeven, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of this Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to present on the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and what we've accomplished since President Trump took office. President Dwight D. Eisenhower said, "Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil, and you're a thousand miles from the corn field." I can assure you, being a part of agriculture and visiting with the people who tend the land and our nation's livestock every day, farming isn't easy. I am proud of the work we are doing at USDA. Making Agriculture Great Again means promoting efficiencies, cutting regulatory red tape, and refocusing the mission to expand market opportunities for farmers rather than promoting programs that only satisfy the special interests of Washington D.C., bureaucrats who have never set foot in a field or pasture.

For far too long, the hardworking Americans who feed, fuel, and clothe the world were left on the sidelines. Farmers and Ranchers now have a seat at the table. We have had an action-packed first one hundred days of the Trump Administration, affirming the bold leadership of President Donald J. Trump. I've visited fifteen States, attended or held over one hundred events, and have visited with hundreds of different agricultural stakeholders. In the first one hundred days we have reprioritized American Agriculture.

Since my first day, we have been intensely focused on tackling the avian influenza crisis. It was my very first briefing at USDA and I fully understand the importance of animal health issues and the effects they have not just on ranchers and producers, but on everyday consumers. In February, at the direction of President Trump, we announced a five-pronged plan to curb avian influenza to protect producers and lower egg prices for all Americans. A plan which has been applauded by agriculture and government leaders across the country. Today, a dozen eggs at wholesale cost less than half of what they did at the end of February. The expansion of biosecurity assessments available to commercial poultry producers has also been successful. I am happy to report that, since I've taken office, we have completed over four hundred wildlife

biosecurity assessments and biosecurity incentive-focused assessments combined. As this program expands, we expect these results to continue to impress. We also know that America thrives when it innovates. That's why we have such hope for the up to one hundred million dollars announced as a funding opportunity to explore prevention, therapeutics, research, and potential vaccine candidates to protect poultry from avian influenza. These projects should give us new and innovative tools to use to keep the virus away, protect producers, and keep prices low for consumers.

While much of the public attention has been on avian influenza, we are also working around the clock to address the other threats to our farmers and ranchers, including New World screwworm. This pest feeds on livestock and could seriously jeopardize our food supply and create an economic impact of well over a billion dollars if it enters through our southern border. This devastating pest started spreading north through Central America under Joe Biden's failed leadership. Under President Trump, we are working to drive this pest south, out of Mexico by using proven sterile insect technology. This approach has been successful in previous eradication efforts, and it remains the most effective strategy to protect our domestic industry from this devastating pest. To address the ongoing spread of New World screwworm I recently sent a letter to my counterpart in Mexico demanding Mexico eliminate impediments to aircraft operations and landings that were impairing the U.S. response, which was successful, and we are now landing the planes we need to.

On the eve of a nearly fifty-billion-dollar agricultural trade deficit, USDA is not sitting idle, but taking action to move our industry back to becoming a net exporter. USDA's Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs is well positioned to help producers gain new market access opportunities. Since President Trump took office, USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service has expanded access to foreign markets for U.S. agricultural products. Panama partially opened its pork import quota mechanism, which will allow an estimated additional thirty million dollars in U.S. pork product exports. South Africa also restored market access for U.S. microwave popcorn shipments, valued at two to three million dollars. USDA conducted two trade missions to Thailand and Guatemala and hosted USA Pavilions at six global trade shows with a combined total of two hundred and eighty-two million dollars in projected exports. In the last two months, FAS has worked with India to reduce India's tariff on U.S. bourbon imports by fifty percent,

resulting in a likely two million dollar increase in distilled spirits exports to India in 2025. We worked with Japan to lift the mandatory aflatoxin testing requirements on U.S. almonds, resulting in a likely eight to ten percent increase of U.S. almond exports to Japan annually.

Looking ahead, USDA will continue its efforts to improve foreign market access for U.S. producers and address the agricultural trade deficit. In April, USDA launched agricultural trade promotion programs for fiscal year 2026 and is accepting applications for four export market development programs totaling over two hundred and fifty million dollars. I will also visit seven countries in the next six months: Vietnam, Japan, India, Peru, Brazil, Italy, and the United Kingdom. Together with the U.S. Trade Representative, we will build new markets, expand current markets, and hold existing trading partners accountable to ensure trade is fair and reciprocal and that the competitive position of U.S. agriculture reaches new heights. USDA is committed to leveling the playing field by identifying unfair imports, breaking down export barriers, tackling non-tariff sanitary and phytosanitary obstacles, advocating for lower foreign tariffs on U.S. agricultural exports, and diversifying foreign markets for U.S. exports. USDA is dedicated to an America First policy, ensuring that every action USDA takes overseas makes America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

On March 19, ahead of its statutory deadline, we issued ten billion dollars in economic assistance for farmers and ranchers through the FSA-administered Emergency Commodity Assistance Program which was passed by congress in December of 2025. The program has been extremely efficient, paying farmers within three business days of an application submission. A note of thanks to all of you for your unwavering support for producers in times of economic crisis by passing that legislation. USDA is working to soon roll out its Congressionally authorized Supplemental Disaster Relief, over twenty billion dollars. On April 22, USDA dispersed three hundred and forty million Congressionally mandated disaster dollars across thirty-one States to deliver relief to farmers, ranchers and rural communities impacted by natural disasters such as hurricanes and wildfires that have caused devastation across the country. We are also making sure these programs are offering the most effective assistance where needed and not duplicating and wasting taxpayer money.

There is a very public, yet very important endeavor to make America healthy again through the President's Executive Order No. 14212. It is no secret diet-related, chronic disease is

plaguing American families, including a substantial portion of children and adolescents from low-income households. At the direction of President Trump, I, along with relevant stakeholders, will continue to explore ways to encourage better health through the Make America Healthy Again Commission. In talking to Governors, many States are interested in testing innovative solutions to our nation's many health crises. I have made it clear, and I will do so here, that I am open to these requests and look forward to providing technical assistance and dialogue. There have been significant developments on this around the country during State legislative sessions, and we look forward to receiving State requests to operate pilot programs to make the program more nutritious.

On February 13, upon my swearing in, I sent a letter to States and tribal, territory, and local government partners. I reminded them that the mission of the Department's sixteen nutrition programs is critical, but that the American taxpayer expects their generosity to be valued and for programs to be executed with integrity and accountability. The letter noted a suite of guiding principles, each of which can serve as catalysts for change, allowing the Department—and the American taxpayer—to better serve vulnerable families and communities. It is important to note, USDA spends four hundred and five million dollars a day on nutrition programs. Furthermore, USDA issued guidance to all State agencies directing them to enhance identity and immigration verification practices when determining eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This is to make certain that SNAP benefits exclude any ineligible alien who entered the United States illegally, or is otherwise unlawfully present in the U.S. A recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report indicated a staggering ten and a half billion dollars in improper SNAP payments were made in fiscal year 2023 alone. This was about twelve percent of total SNAP payments that year. The inadequate verification of an applicant's identity and citizenship by States is specifically highlighted as contributing to the improper payments of SNAP funds.

Under President Trump's leadership, we are streamlining unnecessary regulations and cutting red tape for agricultural producers, and other industries under the USDA purview, to allow them to feed, fuel, and clothe the world. This includes making sweeping reforms to protect national forests and boost domestic timber production, ending regulations that have stifled energy and mineral development on Federal lands so we may reaffirm America's role as a global

energy powerhouse, and reducing wildfire risk through public-private partnerships and many other actions. I have been fortunate to spend time with our wildland firefighters to thank them for their heroic service. I value their perspectives and feedback, and I am proud of the work they do to save lives and protect our beautiful homeland. We will continue to execute President Trump's agenda to make America's forests healthy and productive again.

In March, I announced new action to reduce burdens on the U.S. pork and poultry industries, allowing for greater efficiency while maintaining food safety standards. We are extending waivers allowing existing establishments to maintain higher line speeds and are moving towards rulemaking to make these standards permanent for more pork and poultry plants. We have also withdrawn overly burdensome proposals related to Salmonella in poultry as we reconsider more effective ways to achieve public health objectives. These reforms will strengthen U.S. food production, reduce costs for producers, and support a more resilient supply chain—all without compromising food safety. It is also important for farmers and ranchers to have access to timely, accurate, and useful statistics to help make important decisions about their operations; however, the Biden Administration ignored this directive and cancelled the July Cattle Report and the County Estimates for Crops and Livestock last year. I am so pleased to share that the National Agricultural Statistics Service has reinstated these critical reports, and they will be published later this year.

American agriculture began four centuries ago, when neighbors born across an ocean came together in a New World to clear fields, build homes, and plant crops on the edge of wilderness. That same spirit animates us now. Our farmers who tend the fields do not rest from their labor—neither do our ranchers and livestock producers who steward their lands, herds, and flocks—and neither do the American mothers and fathers who rely upon American agriculture to feed their families. American agriculture does not rest—and neither will we at USDA. I'm proud to be at the helm of the People's Department, at the table with President Trump, and fighting for the most American of industries —agriculture.