

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

Hearing to Review the FY2020 Budget Request for the U.S. Department of Agriculture

April 11, 2019

(As prepared for delivery)

This hearing will come to order. Good morning. The purpose of today's hearing is to discuss the Department of Agriculture's fiscal year 2020 budget request. Thank you to Secretary Perdue for being here today, along with Dr. Johannsson and Ms. Navarro. Welcome.

I hope today's discussion will clarify the Administration's support for rural America and production agriculture. The proposed reductions would directly impact the small rural communities many of us call home. Production agriculture is the cornerstone of local rural economies, and weakening the farm safety net leaves farmers and ranchers vulnerable to low commodity prices and unforeseen weather conditions. Farmers and ranchers in North Dakota rely on the Department's tools and resources to stay in business during these tumultuous times in farm country.

Cuts to agricultural research undermine our country's ability to compete internationally and meet the demands of a growing global population. Agriculture remains one of America's net export industries due to open trade and we must continue to explore foreign market access for our producers.

While I support many proposals included in the President's budget, such as increased funding for our military and defense, the burden of balancing the federal budget cannot be placed on the backs of farmers, rural communities, and food aid recipients.

In our fiscal year 2019 appropriations bill, this Subcommittee made great strides towards modernizing infrastructure in rural America, increasing funding for agricultural research programs, and enhancing pest and disease prevention and response efforts. I look forward to hearing an update on the Department's plans for implementation of these priorities.

I believe we should be investing in the future of agriculture and rural America. As Chairman, I look forward to working with Senator Merkley and other members of the Subcommittee to identify those priorities and make the most effective and efficient decisions on behalf of American taxpayers.

I look forward to discussing these issues and others with you today, Mr. Secretary. I would now like to turn to our Ranking Member, Senator Merkley, for his opening statement.

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