



Chairman Robert Aderholt

*Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations*

Full Committee Markup FY 2015 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

May 29, 2014

Opening Statement As Prepared

You have before you the FY 2015 appropriations bill and report for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies as reported by the Subcommittee on May 20th.

At our subcommittee mark up, our distinguished Ranking Member Farr said that 90 percent of the bill is good, and 10 percent is not so good. Even though we disagree on 10 percent of the bill or less, I am pleased that we appear to have bi-partisan support for a grade “A” product.

I want to thank the Ranking Member for his cooperative spirit and all of his work, and that of his staff, to bring this bill to the Committee today. I also want to express my appreciation to all of our Subcommittee members for participating in our hearings, sharing their ideas and concerns, and helping to develop the bill. Of course, none of this would be happening without Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Lowey, and their commitment to a regular annual appropriations process.

Total funding in this bill equals \$142.5 billion. This is \$1.5 billion below the President’s request and \$3 billion below the FY 2014 enacted level. The bill includes \$20.88 billion in discretionary budget authority, which is the same as the FY 2014 enacted level. Mandatory spending totals \$122 billion or \$3 billion below the FY 2014 level. These mandatory funds support USDA’s farm, conservation, crop insurance, and nutrition programs.

I would like to briefly mention a few highlights of the bill:

We provide a total of \$2.65 billion for agricultural research. We received many, many letters requesting support for the land-grant colleges and universities. We were able to provide level funding for them. We also provided \$325 million, as requested, for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, USDA’s premier competitive research grants program.

We provide \$870 million for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. This agency is on the frontline, working to eradicate plant and animal diseases and keep the bad bugs out of the country. Because of the efforts of Ranking Member Farr and Reps. Rooney and Valadao, I’m pleased we were able to increase funding to combat citrus greening disease. Rep. Latham –

increased funding in a couple of accounts within the bill for the viral epidemic in pig populations will supplement emergency funding that the Administration is expected to release for research and surveillance purposes. Thanks to these colleagues and others who showed interest in the bill, we were able to place special emphasis on a few of the highest national priorities facing agriculture today.

The bill includes more than \$1 billion for the Food Safety and Inspection Service. This is approximately the same as the FY 2014 level but \$3.8 million above the request. It will maintain more than 8,000 inspectors at the more than 6,400 meat, poultry, and egg product facilities across the country.

The bill provides \$1.5 billion for the Farm Service Agency and does not allow the closure of county offices. Strong efforts from Rep. Nunnelee and other members showed opposition to USDA's proposal at a time when the 2014 farm bill is still being implemented in county offices across the country. We also fully fund the various farm loan programs.

For the Natural Resources Conservation Service, we provide \$869 million to help farmers, ranchers, and private forest land owners to conserve and protect their land. Rep. Cole – you will be pleased that we increased funding to help rehabilitate small dams.

My district is mostly rural. I know firsthand that rural parts of the country face unique challenges. This bill is the only one of the 12 that truly focuses on these areas. As such, we provide a total of \$2.6 billion for rural development programs. This includes funding to support \$881 million in business and industry loans, \$1.3 billion in loans for rural water and waste programs, and \$6.2 billion for rural electric and telephone infrastructure. We also provide more than \$1 billion for the single family direct loan program, \$1.1 billion for rental assistance, and \$30 million for the Mutual and Self-Help program. At times, we have questioned USDA's commitment to rural development programs when we see such cuts as those proposed for rural housing. However, there is strong support for them in the House. Thank you to all of you who expressed support.

As you know, this bill includes both discretionary and mandatory funding for USDA's food and nutrition programs. Specifically, it provides \$6.6 billion for the Women, Infants, and Children program. This is \$93 million below the FY 2014 enacted level and \$200 million below the budget request. However, the Committee has not decreased funding to simply save money. This is because of a declining caseload and large carryover balances from the previous year, which is acknowledged by USDA, OMB, and CBO. Every person who is eligible for the program will receive benefits under this funding level. The bill includes \$20.5 billion in required mandatory funding for child nutrition programs and \$82.3 billion for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP. This funding level helps more than 47 million Americans each month.

To support those at this time of need in places like Syria, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic, the bill provides \$1.7 billion for overseas food aid. I'm pleased to report we were able to provide a \$66 million increase for Food for Peace grants and \$13 million more for the McGovern-Dole education and child nutrition program over the budget request by finding savings to offset the increase.

The Food and Drug Administration receives almost \$2.6 billion in discretionary funding in this bill. This is an increase of \$23 million over the FY 2014 level. When the user fees are included,

FDA will receive \$4.5 billion in FY 2015. Within the total, the Committee provides a \$25 million increase, the full amount requested for food safety activities in the President's budget and drug safety activities are increased by \$12 million.

The bill provides \$218 million for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. This is an increase of \$3 million above last year's level and is intended to address needed information technology needs.

Before I close, I would like to address one issue that I know Mr. Farr and I disagree on. This is the provision that would allow schools to seek a temporary waiver from the current school lunch standards if a school district has lost money over a six-month time period as a result of trying to implement the new regulations. I have had a constant stream of letters, calls, e-mails, and meetings this past year from school nutritionists, those who we affectionately call the lunch ladies; teachers and school administrators; and parents concerned about rising costs, increased waste, and declining participation. This is a very real problem in many school districts across the country. The bill acknowledges the concerns of schools and responds to their request for flexibility.

Please note that the language *only* allows schools more time if they need it. It does not change the standards or amend the underlying law in any way. In fact, the bill allows something very similar to the flexibility USDA announced last Tuesday regarding whole grain requirements. We are going to talk much more about this today, so I will save my remarks for that time.

The Subcommittee members worked very hard to incorporate the funding priorities of those on both sides of the aisle. Thank you for your attention and I ask for your full support of this bipartisan legislation. I look forward to reporting this bill to the House today.

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