

Chairman Jack Kingston
Hearing on USDA's FY 2013 Budget Proposal
February 17, 2012
Chairman's Opening Statement- AS PREPARED

The Subcommittee will come to order.

First, I want to welcome back all of the members of the Agriculture Subcommittee as we begin the first of eleven hearings on the President's FY 2013 budget request. I look forward to working with each and every one of you as we move into this year's appropriations process. I am also looking forward to a successful follow-up to last year's process. After completing action last year on H.R. 1, and the continuing resolution, we quickly shifted into moving the FY 2012 Agriculture Appropriations bill. We marked up in subcommittee and full committee last May, we spent 25 hours and considered 62 amendments on the floor in June, and our conference report was signed into law on November 18th. With that, I would be remiss if I didn't stop here and express my deep appreciation to Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Dicks for their strong support in allowing us to move our bill last year. While not a perfect process, we will strive to match that schedule again, and who knows, maybe even be signed into law by the beginning of FY 2013. So, thank you Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Dicks, and especially to my Ranking Member, Mr. Farr.

Second, I want to welcome to the subcommittee the Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan, Chief Economist Dr. Joe

Glauber, and Mike Young, USDA's Budget Director to our first hearing on the President's FY 2013 budget request.

The USDA portion of the request before this subcommittee totals just over \$18 billion which is a net increase of a little more than a \$1 billion when compared to the FY 2012 enacted level. I have to tell you that we are under the same fiscal constraints as we were the last two fiscal years and so any net increase will be a challenge. The budget request appears in some ways to be headed in the right direction. While you are requesting \$932 million in increases, you are also requesting about \$470 million in program decreases. We may not agree on these proposals, but at least there is some balance. A portion of the \$1 billion difference is due to these programmatic increases and decreases, and a portion of it is due to a lower level of proposed changes in mandatory programs in the request.

In other ways, this budget is headed in the wrong direction. The budget request proposes \$122 billion for mandatory spending, or an increase of more than \$5 billion over FY 2012. This escalation of uncontrolled spending is weighing heavily on the taxpayers of our country. We all must make some sacrifice. The Administration had plenty of opportunities to moderate or scale back these programs by focusing on only those of highest need, yet the few legislative proposals contained in the budget not only allow for the same auto-pilot mandatory spending, but increase spending.

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.

Chairman Rogers?

Thank you, Chairman Rogers.

Mr. Dicks?

Thank you, Mr. Dicks.

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. I would ask every member to adhere to this rule today, and in all of our hearings.

We may have several rounds of questioning to allow everyone ample time to question our witnesses. There are two other appropriations hearings taking place this morning, and 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.

Secretary Vilsack, 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.