

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture
Washington, DC 20515

TO: The Honorable Tom Davis, Chairman
House Committee on Government Reform
The Honorable Robert W. Ney, Chairman
House Committee on House Administration

FROM: The Honorable Bob Goodlatte, Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture

DATE: February 16, 2005

SUBJECT: Oversight Plan for the House Committee on
Agriculture for the 109th Congress



Pursuant to Rule X, clause 2(d)(1) of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 109th Congress, I submit the following plan to fulfill the General Oversight Responsibilities reporting requirements. This outline was prepared in consultation with the Ranking Member, was presented to the full Committee for its consideration, and is now offered for your consideration relative to your responsibilities under the Rules.

The following agenda constitutes the oversight plan of the Committee on Agriculture for the 109th Congress. It includes areas in which the Committee and its subcommittees expect to conduct oversight or investigation of additional matters or programs as they arise. The Committee will consult, as appropriate, with other committees of the House that may share subject matter interest. If you have any questions regarding this outline, do not hesitate to contact me.

OVERSIGHT PLAN
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
109TH CONGRESS

The Committee expects to exercise appropriate oversight activity with regard to the following issues:

2002 FARM BILL AND CURRENT AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIC CONDITIONS:

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) implementation of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002;
- Current status of U.S. farm economy;
- Oversight of implementation of new peanut program, including marketing loan program, direct payments, counter-cyclical payments, and quota compensation payments;
- USDA's implementation of the Fair and Equitable Tobacco Reform Act of 2004;
- Impact of 2003 and 2004 calendar year weather conditions on 2004 crop production;

- USDA's implementation of agricultural disaster assistance contained in the fiscal 2005 Military Construction Appropriations conference report;
- Oversight of USDA's activities regarding the implementation of the U.S. Warehouse Act;
- Reauthorization of the United States Grain Standards Act; and
- Implementation of Title IX of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002.

FEDERAL CROP INSURANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT:

- Administration of the Federal Crop Insurance Program, including implementation of the insurance provisions contained in the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000 in light of 2003 and 2004 crop and livestock disasters and continued drought conditions into the 2005 crop year;
- Risk Management Agency implementation of Premium Reduction Plans;
- Review of private sector risk management tools available to producers;
- USDA implementation of statutory provisions designed to reduce crop insurance program waste and improve program integrity;
- Proposed policy options regarding crop insurance options for revenue and gross income protection and multi-year disasters;
- Reauthorization of the CFTC; and
- Oversight of electricity market investigations by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

AGRICULTURAL TRADE:

- The Administration is negotiating the World Trade Organization (WTO) multilateral trade agreement affecting U.S. agriculture. Negotiations continue on the Agricultural Agreement under the Doha Development Agenda;
- Bilateral and regional FTAs are being negotiated (CAFTA-DR, Panama, Bahrain, etc.) and the impact on U.S. agriculture will be assessed;
- Countries that are under consideration for accession to the WTO, such as Russia will be evaluated on the impact on U.S. agriculture;
- USDA's implementation of the Trade Title of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 will be reviewed in preparation for the new Farm Bill;
- USDA and USTR's implementation of trade agreements already adopted and related issues to ensure compliance of other countries' trade obligations, including:
 - WTO dispute settlement provisions (cotton, biotechnology, geographical indications);
 - European Union (EU) issues such as the EU meat hormone ban;
 - use of the U.S. carousel legislation;
 - tariff rate quotas (TRQ);
 - biotechnology;
 - EU non-trade concerns, including animal welfare;

- import and export state trading enterprises;
- Issues relating to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA):
 - Canada's use of high tariffs for dairy, poultry, eggs, barley, and margarine products;
 - Canadian exports of wheat, barley, and other agricultural commodities into the U.S.;
 - Mexico's actions that can impair NAFTA trade on U.S. pork, apples, beef, and rice;
 - Mexico's sanitary and phytosanitary barriers on grains and meat;
 - Mexico's tax on soft drinks using high fructose corn syrup;
 - U.S. sugar;
- International food assistance programs to ensure that program goals are being met in the most recent uses of the program reauthorized in the 2002 Farm Bill, including the Global Food for Education Program, Food for Progress Program, and P.L. 480; and
- Congressional oversight of trade negotiations that affects U.S. food assistance programs.

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND PROMOTION:

- Review implementation of biosecurity protocols at USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) laboratories;
- USDA's implementation of research, education and extension programs authorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998, and the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000;
- Administration of the Agricultural Research Service's research stations and worksites;
- Review USDA's continuing ability to conduct foreign animal disease research, training and diagnostic programs at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center following the transfer of the center to the Department of Homeland Security;
- Federal efforts to facilitate research and development of aquacultural enterprises, specifically focusing on the activities of the Joint Committee on Aquaculture, chaired by the Secretary of Agriculture and including the Secretaries of Interior and Commerce;
- Implementation of USDA's regulation on organic standards;
- Review coordination between ARS, Economic Research Service (ERS), Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) and action agencies in USDA such as Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) in order to prevent duplicative research;
- Review operation of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board;
- Evaluate the current mix of research funding mechanisms to insure maximum benefits from these investments to food and fiber producers, processors and consumers; and
- Administration of USDA's agricultural marketing and promotion programs and to assess what, if any, legislation may be needed to carry out these programs.

CONSERVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT:

- Comparing conservation payments to commodity program payments and their effect of

- keeping producers profitable;
- Impact of regulatory activities carried out pursuant to the Endangered Species Act, or any proposed legislative changes to such Act, on agricultural producers;
 - Oversight of regulatory initiatives undertaken by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) concerning Endangered Species Act consultations regarding pesticide products regulated under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act;
 - Impact of EPA's regulatory activity relative to methyl bromide on production of agriculture in the U.S.;
 - Review of the resource needs of the EPA as they pertain to the collection of pesticide registration, re-registration and tolerance fees;
 - Review of the continuing international negotiations concerning implementation of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants to the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, and the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade;
 - Budget and program activities of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS);
 - NRCS implementation of the technical service provider assistance provisions of Farm Security and Rural Investment Act '02;
 - Review of the initial implementation of the Conservation Security Program;
 - Review of USDA's Conservation Reserve and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program;
 - Review of implementation of the EPA's rule on animal feeding operations and its impact on the U.S. livestock industry and the practical uses of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to ease implementation of the rule;
 - Review of EPA's rule on permit trading under the Clean Water Act and its effect on and potential benefits to U.S. agriculture;
 - Review of potential impacts of EPA's Clean Air Act regulatory program on U.S. agriculture;
 - Potential consequences for production agriculture in the U.S. should the mandates contained in the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change be implemented by treaty, law or regulation;
 - Impact of regulatory activities carried out pursuant to the Endangered Species Act, or any proposed legislative changes to the ESA, on agricultural producers;
 - Impact of EPA's regulatory activity relative to methyl bromide on production agriculture in the U.S.;
 - Review EPA's implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA), Federal Insecticide Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) and Pesticide Registration Improvement Act (PRIA);
 - Review the impact of litigation on producers who are complying with FIFRA, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Clean Water Act;
 - Review the EPA's regulatory actions in regard to pesticide evaluations; and

- Review of EPA's Air Quality Compliance Agreement for Animal Feeding Operations and its impact on U.S. livestock producers.

BIOTECHNOLOGY:

- Review issues related to trade barriers and possible promotion or increase of trade regarding products helpful to third world countries (pharma/nutraceuticals);
- Review current regulatory framework for products of agricultural biotechnology;
- Specifically, review current regulations and research regarding animal biotechnology; and
- Promote education, outreach and research for increased consumer acceptance of products of biotechnology.

U.S. FOREST SERVICE ADMINISTRATION:

- Review Forest Service budget, focusing on proposed land acquisition and easement programs;
- Review Forest Service financial management and accounting, including progress towards clean financial statements and review of GAO's assessment of Forest Service's fiscal health;
- Continue oversight of Healthy Forests Restoration Act implementation, particularly Title IV projects;
- Continue oversight of Forest Service fire management program, focusing on reducing costs, achieving efficiencies in aviation management, and addressing other procurement problems;
- Conduct oversight on implementation of PL 106-393, the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act, in preparation for eventual reauthorization;
- Review and assess effectiveness and appropriateness of programs authorized in Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act, particularly those providing technical assistance and financial assistance to private forest landowners, in preparation for the 2006 Farm Bill;
- Assess effectiveness of Forest Service's commodity programs, including forest products and grazing management;
- Review Administration efforts to reform the National Forest Planning process;
- Review status and implementation of Forest Service's Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) policy, with particular attention to the extent to which the Forest Service uses local input to guide implementation; and
- Assess Forest Service research program to ensure it focuses on enhancing the competitiveness of the domestic forestry sector, including forest products industry and non-Federal forest landowners.

DAIRY:

- Review structure of domestic dairy industry and how it facilitates or impedes development of new products;
- Review opportunities to improve competitiveness in export markets for U.S.-produced dairy products; and
- Review options to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of dairy programs in light of current budgetary realities.

USDA GENERAL ADMINISTRATION:

- Implementation of USDA's Civil Rights settlement; and
- Confidentiality of information provided to USDA by agricultural producers.

FARM CREDIT, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AND THE RURAL ECONOMY:

- Farm Credit Administration's (FCA) regulatory program and activities regarding the Farm Credit System (FCS) to assure the FCS' safety and soundness;
- Review of Farmer Mac activities and programs;
- Implementation of rural development policies and authorities contained in FSRIA '02 and the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act;
- Review the status of the Rural Telephone Bank
- Oversight of the USDA's Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee Program
- Oversight of the implementation of the USDA's Telecommunications Programs
- Review of rural telecommunications issues
- Review of agriculture technology issues

USDA FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS:

- Hearings will be held in preparation of the Farm Bill and related to reauthorization of the food and nutrition programs under the jurisdiction of the Agriculture Committee, including the food stamp program, the emergency food assistance program and other commodity distribution programs;
- Review of the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and any changes to the USDA Pyramid;
- USDA food assistance programs and obesity;
- Oversight of the provisions of the food stamp program, including those related to:
 - Food stamp benefits for non-citizens;
 - Transitional food stamp benefits for persons leaving welfare programs;
 - Simplification of the food stamp program by states;

- Employment and training programs for food stamp participants who are 18 to 50; years old, able-bodied and with no dependents;
- Monitor and hold hearings on the reauthorization of the program of block grants for states for temporary assistance for needy families (TANF), including waiver authority for the food stamp program and initiation of the state food assistance block grant demonstration project, as introduced in H.R. 240 on January 4, 2005;
- Assess states' use of electronic benefits transfer (EBT) systems to improve the distribution of food benefits;
- Review of the reformed food stamp quality control system on reducing overpayments, payments to ineligible participants and underpayments to assess states' administration of the food stamp program; and
- Oversight of commodity distribution programs, including the emergency food assistance program (TEFAP).

FOOD SAFETY:

- USDA's administration of the meat and poultry inspection laws and the Food and Drug Administration's food inspection activities, including seafood and seafood products to ensure that policies and resources are focused on developing scientifically sound systems for food safety assurance;
- USDA's efforts to educate consumers regarding safe food handling practices, the development of microbial interventions to reduce the frequency and severity of food borne illnesses, expanded research and development of pathogen reduction technologies, as well as streamlined, science-based policies relative to assessment and approval of food safety technologies;
- Review implementation of new protocols for meat, poultry, eggs, or seafood safety inspection, including the implementation of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) pathogen reduction regulation; and
- Impact of lawsuits challenging aspects of food safety inspection modernization efforts including authority to establish and enforce microbiological performance standards and (HACCP) based inspection models.

PLANT AND ANIMAL HEALTH:

- Review implementation of the Plant Protection Act of 2000;
- Review implementation of the Animal Health Protection Act of 2002;
- Review enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act;
- Federal efforts to reduce threats to human, animal, and plant health due to predatory and invasive species;
- USDA's management of domestic pest and disease surveillance and eradication programs;
- Oversight of USDA's expanded BSE surveillance program;

- Review implementation of USDA's final rule recognizing Canada as a BSE Minimal Risk Country;
- Oversight of a national animal identification system that is being developed and implemented by USDA and to assess what, if any, legislation may be needed to carry out this program;
- Department of Homeland Security-Customs and Border Patrol (HS-CBP) administration of the Animal Health Protection Act and Plant Protection Act border inspections;
- Review of DHS-CBP expenditures of Agricultural Quarantine Inspection funds transferred from USDA-APHIS;
- Review of DHS operation of Plum Island Animal Disease Center; and
- The issue of new drug development, approval, and availability for animal agriculture as well as the implementation of the Animal Drug Availability Act.

LIVESTOCK MARKETING:

- Review potential changes and implementation of mandatory livestock price reporting and to assess what, if any, legislation may be needed to carry out this program;
- USDA's implementation of voluntary Country of Origin Labeling in preparation for mandatory Country of Origin Labeling;
- Effectiveness of the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) in monitoring the potential for market manipulation in the livestock industry; and
- Structural changes in agribusiness and the potential costs and benefits for agricultural producers.

HOMELAND SECURITY AND BIOTERRORISM:

- Review the implementation of the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 including USDA and HHS joint regulation of select biological agents and toxins; also, protection against adulteration of food, debarment for repeated or serious food import violations, registration of food facilities and other activities;
- USDA's ability to protect, prevent and effectively deal with an attack on agriculture and its infrastructure;
- Oversight of the transfer of the Agricultural Quarantine Inspection responsibility from the USDA to the Department of Homeland Security;
- USDA's management of domestic pest and disease surveillance and eradication programs in light of the transfer of resources to the Department of Homeland Security; and
- USDA's continuing ability to conduct foreign animal disease research, training and diagnostic programs at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center following the transfer of the center to the Department of Homeland Security.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Adequacy of agricultural labor and the agricultural guest worker program, H2A; and
- Review implementation of the Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act.

CONSULTATION WITH OTHER COMMITTEES TO REDUCE DUPLICATION:

- With Resources Committee on forestry issues and other public land issues;
- With Science Committee on Research;
- With Ways and Means and Education and the Workforce on nutrition programs;
- With Homeland Security on importation of animal and plant material;
- With Judiciary on immigrant agricultural labor;
- With Energy and Commerce on biomass energy programs both existing and new; and
- With any other committee as appropriate.