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Question1:

Question2: Good afternoon. My name is Jon Dockter and I am the Associate Director of the Minnesota Canola Council. On behalf of the state's canola producers, I'd like to welcome (you) Secretary Johanns to Minnesota. We appreciate your willingness to hear our concerns in person.

As you may know, canola continues to enjoy its status as the healthiest of all vegetable oils as it has the lowest saturated fat of any vegetable oil on the market. The recently published U.S. Dietary Guidelines even acknowledged that Americans should consume more of the good fats, like those found in canola oil. In spite of this fact, however, our industry has struggled to grow our acres in recent years. Canola acreage in the U.S. has decreased more than 30% in just the last 4 years, from its peak of 1.5 million acres to approximately 1 million acres today. In Minnesota, canola acreage has decreased significantly as well. Weather has played a role in that reduction, preventing planting in our major production area. But more specifically, an insufficient loan rate has caused producers to consider planting alternative crops rather than canola.

The minor oilseed loan rate serves as a critical safety net for minor oilseed producers. It not only acts as a price floor for producers, but as an equally important risk management tool viewed by lenders as an integral part of any typical farm plan. In the current Farm Bill, however, the minor oilseed loan rate dropped to \$9.30. To make matters worse, this decline, which served to weaken our safety net, occurred at a time when our input costs skyrocketed.

Processors have also informed us that minor oilseed acreage in the U.S. this year will not be sufficient to allow domestic crushers to operate their plants at full capacity without relying on imports, which this year are projected to reach record levels.

My testimony today addresses one of the key questions asked by USDA concerning the ability of the U.S. to compete in global markets. The success of U.S. agriculture depends upon our ability to produce products that meet worldwide demand. Farm policy can and should help us maximize our competitiveness by providing the necessary tools to produce those crops which are in demand worldwide. We believe strongly that USDA must do its part to ensure canola and other minor oilseed growers maintain profitability by strengthening the minor oilseed loan rate.

Thank you for your appearance here at Farmfest and for the opportunity to provide you with input.

Question3:

Question4:
Question5:
Question6: