

TRANSCRIPT

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Transcript of the Missouri Farm Bill Forum with Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns and Moderators Tom Steever, Brownfield Network and Suzanne Hubbard, KKOW Springfield, Missouri November 4, 2005

MS. HUBBARD: First off is Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Johanns. Let's give him a round of applause.

(Applause.)

MS. HUBBARD: We also have our Congressman, Senator Jim Talent. The Hon. Senator Jim Talent is with us today.

(Applause.)

MS. HUBBARD: And Representative Jo Ann Emerson, from the Eighth District.

(Applause.)

MS. HUBBARD: Before we begin today, it is only appropriate that we honor our country. And we have several folks with us here today to help us do just that. We have to present the Colors the Willard High School Navy Junior Reserve Color Guard. Then, to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance, we will have Missouri 4-H Council Secretary Elizabeth Shellhorn, and Missouri FFA Secretary Jordan Haymes. And then, to lead us in the National Anthem, Joanna Bellis, from Mount Vernon High School. She serves as their FFA President.

Please stand as we salute our country.

(Pledge of Allegiance is recited.)

(National Anthem sung.)

(Applause.)

(Colors are presented.)

MS. HUBBARD: You may be seated.

Well, good afternoon. And I am very excited to be here for the next three hours, as I am sure several of you are excited to make comments here today. Before we begin listening to you, though, I thought it best to start out with some comments coming from our representatives. And we will begin today first with Representative Jo Ann Emerson.

REP. JO ANN EMERSON: Thank you, all.

Secretary Johanns, I want to thank you on behalf of my colleague, Roy Blunt, in whose district we are today, and apologize that he cannot be here. But he is busy back in Washington and will be back later tonight. We had a couple of votes this morning, which obviously people know I skipped because I am here with you. But needless to say, since my district comes up, and is probably about 40 miles from where sit today and it borders Arkansas, it borders Tennessee, Kentucky, and Illinois, it is a huge, diverse district, 28 counties. And I am so pleased that we have so many folks from our district here today.

We grow everything in our district, from watermelons to cotton, to rice, soybeans, wheat, corn, milo. You name it; we grow it in our district. Everything actually except for citrus and sugar are grown in the Eighth Congressional District. And we are blessed to have more than a million acres of National Forest as well.

And I know that you know, in listening to all the folks that you have listened to, and all over this country, that we are facing many challenges in agriculture right now. And I am just grateful to you, as I know my colleague Roy is, and my very, very dear friend, Senator Jim Talent, and Senator Bond, who is not here, we are so grateful that you would choose to come to Missouri, to come to Springfield, where we certainly have large cow-calf operations, poultry, dairy, and just an incredible mix of producers from around our State, and so many of them are here today.

Our message to you, and at least my message from the Congressional perspective -- and for those of you who do not know, I do sit on the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee of the full Appropriations Committee. And while it is Jim's job to write the next Farm Bill, it is my job to fund the next Farm Bill, which is always a little tricky, as you well know.

But, needless to say, we have, I believe, really, folks here who represent the heart and soul of America. Rural America, in my opinion, not only has such abundant natural resources but the people represent what I think is the best of America. They are hard working. They have an incredible work ethic and have such strong faith in family and freedom and in their communities. And they want to be able to pass along their livelihoods to their children and to their grandchildren.

But with the high cost of fuel, with the amazingly high cost of fertilizer and other inputs, and the fact that their income continues to decrease, we have got to do something. And one of the things, obviously, that you have been working very hard on is trying to open access to markets.

Now, I am very proud to say that my good friend Sonny Martin over here, from Stoddard County, which is over in the bootheel part of the State, the part that looks just about down into Arkansas, Sonny really was the impetus for me and for Jim Talent to get involved in opening the market of Cuba. I know that that is a touchy situation in the administration and we will not go there, but the access to markets that our producers need to compete on a level playing field with producers all over the world, who are subsidized more heavily than us, is very, very critical.

And I might say that you all are working so hard in the trade rounds now at the WTO, getting ready for the ministerial meetings in Hong Kong, but I do want to give you the message that we cannot unilaterally disarm. American agriculture cannot unilaterally disarm and allow

the Europeans, or any other people, to tell us what to do. And I know that you will take that message loud and clear on behalf of all of our producers.

I also want to commend you, though, for the work that you have done with regard to Rural Development, and understanding the importance of value-added agriculture. I know that, for many of our producers, the opportunity to add value through the production of ethanol, the use of soy diesel, and any other kind of biofuel is really a critical component of what I think the next Farm Bill has to look like.

I am very proud that the reason that we actually now have more of an opportunity to use alternative renewable energy sources is really solely due to my colleague, Jim Talent, who has worked with amazing, amazing stamina, fighting against the oil companies, fighting against a lot of interests, who said, we do not want ethanol, we do not want soy diesel, we are going to rely on oil, oil, oil.

Well, Jim has worked just endlessly on making sure that the Energy Bill that has been signed into law by the President actually mandated a certain amount of ethanol to be used in all vehicles. And without Jim, that would not have happened. I have to tell you a funny story and then I am going to pass it along to my friend, Senator Talent.

The House and Senate have two positions in many instances. And when we were negotiating exactly how to make a compromise on how much ethanol or how much renewable fuel standard we would have, the Senate had a certain amount, 8 billion gallons, and the House had 5 billion gallons. And that is how much we were going to use on yearly basis. And somehow Jim was very successful in having compromised that at 7.5 billion gallons, a good thing for the American farmer and producer and certainly a good thing for the environment as well.

There has been no more of a fighter that I have ever known than my friend, Jim Talent, in the United States Senate, standing up for Missouri agriculture, understanding the fact that we are a huge production agricultural State, and that we have to be very sensitive to the fact that cotton and rice are very important components of our agricultural economy. Jim has stood up, and he has fought and fought and really, I think, made a gigantic difference in the United States Senate.

So it is very much of a privilege for me to introduce to you all Senator Jim Talent.

(Applause.)

SEN. TALENT: Thank you, Jo Ann. Wow. Thank you. Thank you.

Boy, it is great to have your old friends introduce you, because they lay it on so thick. I really appreciate that. That is very nice.

We are a leader, and I am sure the Secretary knows, we are a leader in Missouri in renewable fuels. And the renewable fuel standard and the whole issue of ethanol, biodiesel, and then the new kinds of renewables that are to come, is a classic example of where value added can lead, not just for the agriculture community but for the country as a whole. And you are right, the oil companies did not like that, but we got it anyway. And I just think it is going to be a great hedge against the kind of high energy prices that we are now experiencing.

It is already exercising a moderating influence, and I think it will be better. But we are not here to hear my views about renewable fuels. We are here to be able to express our views to

the Secretary. And I appreciate the chance to do that for a couple of minutes before we then hear from all of you.

I told the Secretary when we were at a little bit of the media availability before, that he has done, I think, 22 of these. And if he had only been able to do one forum, this would have been the State to do it in. Because you will hear from everybody in agriculture in this State, everybody who has anything to do with food or fiber or livestock. If it grows or it is fiber, we have got it here in Missouri, and you are going to about it today. It makes Kit and me, and indeed the whole Congressional delegation, very sensitive to these issues, and we do try and moderate differences sometimes within agriculture.

A great example of that, we are seventh in the country in the production of soybeans and also seventh in the production of watermelons. So we cover the waterfront pretty well here in Missouri.

You are going to hear different views today about what people think of the current Farm Bill. I imagine you are going to hear some people say they are pretty satisfied with the existing framework, and you are going to have some people say we need some significant changes. Here is a political statement: There is something to be said for both of those positions. I am going to be firmly committed to listening to what you all have to say, but I think we call all agree on a couple of things. And this is the message that I wanted to send to the Secretary.

One of them is that the Farm Bill needs to be written based on input from producers around this country in the Congress of the United States by their Representatives. It is not going to be written in the Doha Round. It is not going to be written by our trading partners. And it is not going to be written either, I will say, Mr. Secretary, by the Office of Management and Budget.

(Applause.)

SEN. TALENT: Yes. Thank you for that.

(Applause.)

SEN. TALENT: It is going to be written primarily by the two agriculture committees in the House and the Senate, of course with input from all the other Senators and all the other Congressmen and from you and from your department. And I am glad you are out here soliciting that kind of input. And I hope that you will take that message to our trading partners. They need to understand that it is not even a question of whether the Trade Representative wants to unilaterally disarm -- and we are not going to let that happen. It is just not going to happen.

We are standing behind you, and we are going to insist on having farm programs that are adequate at least to protect family farmers. And with us behind you saying that, that should give you a lot of extra leverage in dealing with the trading partners, and I encourage you to use it. And if they do not believe that, let them pick up the phone and call Jo Ann Emerson. And she tell them that you have got people behind you that are just not going to give as much as they want you to give. So I wanted to send that message to you.

Jo Ann covered some of the unique problems that are confronting farmers now. High energy prices are very difficult for everybody. And a lot of people tend to forget that agriculture is an extremely energy intensive business. And so we are hard hit by that. Also, transportation is an ongoing problem. And the rest of the country, with what has happened because of Katrina

is -- at least one of the good things about that, the rest of the country is aware of the importance of navigation on the rivers to costs and prices and economic growth.

Now, we have been fighting here in Missouri for years and years to keep the Missouri and the Mississippi open, to get the locks and dams built, so that we can move product along those rivers. It is vitally important not only to our farmers but to everybody. That is another point I wanted to make.

I also wanted to emphasize value added to you. That has been done a little bit. I think we are all in agreement on that. And value added works. We need to continue pushing it.

Let me just close by saying that I am proud of our agricultural community. I am proud of the commitment that the Congress and the country and the White House has made in the past and will continue to make to keeping our family farmers healthy and to providing a future for them and for their children and family farming. And that is because of the values that arise from the land, my mom's value -- because we have a dairy farm in our family and it has been in the family about 160 years -- the values of the land are just irreplaceable. If we lose the farmers, we lose those values. And because we have the safest, highest quality, most abundant, and lowest cost food supply in the world because we have a healthy family farming sector.

I cannot think of anything more shortsighted than taking the view that we can just let all of that slip away, import our food, and be better off as a nation. We are seeing now, with what is happening with agriculture, the danger to our country of being hostage in a vital commodity to countries and peoples they do not control. This ought to be something we all agree on, that we need a strong family farming sector.

(Applause.)

SEN. TALENT: And then how we keep that is something about which people in this room will disagree, and certainly reasonable people might disagree.

Finally, my closing is to say this is a great gentleman who is here with us. When we had his confirmation hearings, I was tremendously impressed by the passion that Mike Johanns brings to agriculture. This is a man who did not just need a job or want a job. He wanted to do something for American agriculture. And that is why he took that post. He was not trolling around for a Cabinet job. He cares about it. I believe that very, very strongly. And I am looking forward to working with you on the next Farm Bill in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

(Applause.)

SEC. JOHANNNS: Thank you.

Well, let me, if I might, start out and just say it is great to be in Missouri. I have some people that I want to thank, and I am going to offer a few comments. But as I am going to say here, the most important thing I can do here is listen to you. So I will offer a few comments to get us started and then I am going to kind of sit back and take notes. I will not offer much during the body of this program. And then maybe at the end, if there is time, I will just do a quick wrap-up.

Suzanne Hubbard, we appreciate you being the moderator. Ladies and gentlemen, you will come to realize pretty quickly here that Suzanne is also known as The Enforcer. We have a time limit, because we want to hear from as many people as possible, and Suzanne and probably somebody else sitting there at the table with the lights will tell you when your time limit is up.

I do also want to acknowledge Tom Steever. They are going to be a tag team today. Suzanne will get us started and then Tom, from Brownfield Network, will step in and take over from there.

I think it is just great that the Senator and Congresswoman are here. They gave great opening comments. There are not a lot of things I can add to that.

I also want to thank the wonderful Color Guard, and we had somebody lead us in the Pledge, a couple of people. And then we had somebody sing the National Anthem, and I thought that was outstanding too.

I should also mention Roy Blunt, on a number of occasions, said, as you do these Farm Bill Listening Sessions, you need to come to my district. And so it is great to be in his district. He has his plate really full these days. He is in a very important leadership position. But his wife Abby is here. And Abby, you represent the Blunt family well. So we are glad to have you here.

This is a great crowd. I am going to use a little speaker's privilege here, if I might. You probably did not know this because this is not a well-known fact, but there actually are some Missouri Johannses, and part of them are in the crowd today. So I want my relatives to stand up here and let's give them a round of applause.

(Applause.)

SEC. JOHANNES: They live down the road here, what, 40-45 miles? Not very far away. And it is surprised me. We did a media availability, and there they were. So it was good to see relatives, and it is great to have you here.

Mention was made that I have a passion for agriculture. I grew up on a dairy farm in North Central Iowa, near a community called Osage. Now, some of you look puzzled, not the Johannses back there. They know where Osage is at. But some of you are sitting there, I am sure, wondering, well, where Osage, Iowa is at. So I better clear that up before we get started or you are going to be thinking about that while these folks are testifying.

Ladies and gentlemen, Osage is just south of Stacyville and St. Ansgar, and it is straight east of Manly. So now you know where Osage is at.

(Laughter.)

SEC. JOHANNES: I tell people that I grew up in a family with three sons. And my father, John, he had a notion on how to build character in his sons. He would hand us a pitchfork and he would send us out to the hog house or the barn or the chicken house. And you know what, we would stand about knee-deep and pitch away. That was John's idea of building character in his sons. Little did he know that he was preparing his youngest son, Mike, for his life in politics, right?

(Laughter.)

SEC. JOHANNNS: Oh, boy. I had better stop right there, right?

We have brought a greeting from a really good friend of yours. Many people, as I was going through the confirmation process, said, Mike, we really want you to travel across the country. We want you in our district. We want you in our State. We hope you are the kind of Secretary that really will, as Senator Pat Roberts described it, sit on the wagon tongue and listen to farmers and ranchers. And so we have tried to do a lot of that.

But one gentleman, even up to today, who every time I see him he wants to know how these forums are going, and is so encouraging in terms of me being away from the office so I can be out here. And so I have brought greetings from a friend of mine and a friend of yours, the President of the United States. So if we could roll that.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH (From audiotape): Thanks for letting me speak to you at this Farm Bill Forum. America's farm and ranch families provide a safe and abundant food supply for our people and for much of the world. You represent the best values of America: stewardship of the land, hard work and independence, faith, service, and community.

Mike Johanns understands the importance of America's farmers to our country, which is why I chose him to lead our Department of Agriculture. I am proud of his work, and he will lead our efforts on the next Farm Bill.

Secretary Johanns and I believe the first step in this process is to ask each of you how today's Farm Bill is working and how it can be better. And as we look to improve America's farm policy, we will continue to focus on the following goals:

You see, America has about 5 percent of the world's population, which means 95 percent of your potential customers are overseas. So one of our goals must be to ensure that America's farmers and ranchers have access to open global markets.

A second goal is that we want future generations to have plenty of opportunities to go into agriculture.

Thirdly, we need cooperative conservation that encourages good stewardship of our land and natural habitats.

We also need to act wisely in delivering help to our nation's producers. And we must promote cutting-edge agricultural products and research.

And finally, we must ensure a good quality of life in rural America.

The Farm Bill is important legislation that meets real needs. The next Farm Bill should further strengthen the farm economy and preserve this way of life for farmers and ranchers of the future. Hearing your advice is an important step toward meeting these goals.

I thank you for all you do for our country and thank you for listening.

SEC. JOHANNNS: All right, great. How about a round of applause for the President. Thank you.

(Applause.)

SEC. JOHANNIS: Well, ladies and gentlemen, I am just about done here. As I said, what I am going to do now is kind of sit back and take notes and listen to you. The way I look at this, over the next three hours here, the more I speak, the less opportunity you have to speak. So I am going to be pretty silent here. I may keep kind of a separate card here just noting some things and maybe offer some thoughts at the end if there is time. But other than that, this is really your forum.

Now, just one last thing I would ask you to do. If you have a specific individual issue, maybe you have made application for a loan or something, with one of our mission areas, we are very interested in that. That is why we asked these folks to be with us, and they are lined up across the back there. If you have got a specific issue, let us help you today with that issue.

What we are hoping to secure today, though, is kind of your concept of farm policy, what is working, what is not working, what do you want us to know as we start to think about the Farm Bill. We do want to help you with that individual problem. But if we could just ask you to kind of focus on that idea of what do you think is right about this policy and what is not right. That is why we are here today, to listen to you.

Thank you for the very, very warm welcome back to your State. I appreciate the opportunity to spend some time with you today.

God bless you all.

(Applause.)

MS. HUBBARD: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Now we are going to get into the business of this. This is a USDA Farm Bill Listening Session, and the key word there is "listening." And we are going to be doing a lot of that from you today.

And thank you, Mr. Secretary, for setting the stage of what is about to happen today. We have three microphones that are set up, and we do have some rules that we are going to go over real quick.

When it comes to how long you can talk, the maximum amount of time is two minutes. If you will look at the very front, you are going to have a red light, a yellow light and a green light. For the first minute and a half, you are going to have a green light. For the last 30 seconds, you are going to have a yellow light. And when your time is up and you see that red light, somebody much bigger than me is going to come and make you stop talking. So be prepared for that.

My kids would say I am the enforcer around the house, so we will see if that happens and holds true today. But at any rate, the maximum amount of time you can talk today is two minutes.

Now, Secretary Johannis mentioned, if you do want to make a comment about the upcoming Farm Bill debate but are perhaps scared of the microphone that is okay. There are a couple of different options you can do. You can leave your comment back at the help desk back in the back of the room. Just jot down a comment you might have. You can do it via the U.S. mail. Or you can also do it on the Web at www.usda.gov.

Now, I might also mention that the Forum, by the way, is being recorded and transcribed to be sure that all the comments that are made here today are documented and considered.

I might also mention that we are actually carrying the first hour of this program on our radio stations, so be good, and think about that too while you are talking.

When you do make some comments today, the first thing I would like you to do is have you state your name, the city or county that you are from, and then your involvement with agriculture. So it shows your relation to the upcoming Farm Bill.

Now, you all perhaps had a brochure when you walked in. There are a list of six questions that the Secretary is wanting you to focus on today, so keep that in mind as you come up to the microphone.

I believe, with that, we will begin, and we will start with the lady.

MS. BRADEN: Good afternoon and welcome to Southwest Missouri. My name is Katherine Braden. My husband and I are lifelong cattle ranchers here in Southwest Missouri.

I am here today as a concerned citizen, Taney County Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisor, and was appointed six months ago to the Missouri Soil and Water District Commission by Governor Matt Blunt.

I would like to commend the leadership at the Federal level for their foresight in the conservation provisions in the 2002 Farm Bill, focusing on conservation funding and environmental issues. That Farm Bill placed strong emphasis on the conservation of working lands, ensuring that the land remains both healthy and productive. All the voluntary programs, like WHIP, EQIP, CSP, WRP, and others, are working extremely well in our State.

Missouri has also made a commitment to conservation. For over 20 years, citizens of Missouri have taxed themselves to support soil and water conservation, to my knowledge, the only State whose citizens choose to do so.

But we do not do it alone. We have a strong partnership in Missouri, and the NRCS is a big part of our success. The conservation programs that NRCS administers are compatible with our State programs. We rely on the technical expertise and standards that NRCS brings to the table. NRCS and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources work closely together to update soil science in Missouri to enable us to base decisions on sound science.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that maintaining the conservation provisions and the technical assistance at their current levels in the new Farm Bill are critical to our success in Missouri. We rely on NRCS to be a strong partner in conserving our soil and water resources for future generations. Please keep that partnership healthy and strong by supporting NRCS's current budget levels, staffing and conservation programs. It is important to us and even more important to those who follow in our footsteps.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

MS. HUBBARD: She did a very good job of keeping in the time limit. She must have practiced that. I think we will move on to the next gentleman.

MR. PARDUM: Thank you. Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary, Senator Talent, and Congresswoman Emerson. Welcome to Congressman Blunt's district.

I am Larry Pardum, a dairy farmer from Purdy, Missouri, which is just southwest of here. I am president of the Missouri Dairy Association, which is a statewide dairy commodity organization. I also serve as chairman of Dairy Farmers of America, DEPAC, or Dairy Education Political Action Committee, which has members in 49 States.

We do thank you, Mr. Secretary, for coming to Missouri on behalf of Missouri's farmers and giving us this opportunity to provide input into future farm policy.

Before I start, Senator Talent, we are just as dry as ever. I have had less than two inches of rain since you were at Randy Mooney's farm on August the 19th.

One of the big concerns, and somewhat discouraging to dairy farmers, is the treatment that we get during trade negotiations. I would like to encourage USDA to continue at a fevered pitch of involvement in representing our best interests in future trade negotiations.

Dairy is a highly perishable product. It does have some protections, but, yet, the U.S. has allowed milk protein concentrates to enter the United States through a product identification loophole. It is displacing our domestic milk supply and costing the average Missouri dairy farmer \$2,600 a year.

It is inappropriate, I believe, that Missouri milk prices are determined by a class III price, which is cheese and butter that is produced in the surplus areas of the United States. One possible solution would be to floor a class I price so milk deficit areas would not deteriorate any further. And the good thing about this proposition is it is budget neutral. It comes from the marketplace.

MS. HUBBARD: Larry, you are going to have to wrap it up.

MR. PARDUM: All right. Thank you.

MS. HUBBARD: And I know Larry had some more comments to make. And probably, if several of you do not get done what you would like to get said today, again, the USDA help desk is back there and you can leave your written comments, which many of you have prepared. You can leave those comments back at the USDA help desk.

MR. MOONEY: Thank you. I am Randy Moony, from Rogersville, Missouri, a dairy producer. I am also vice chairman of the board of Dairy Farmers of America. I want to follow up just a bit on what Larry was talking about, market stability, and I want to talk about the Farm Bill.

The market stability offered by safety nets such as price support programs and orderly marketing provisions offered by Federal Milk Marketing Orders are necessary and beneficial to all dairy farmers. There are improvements, however, that Congress can provide that will both support and improve the operation and performance of both programs.

Safety nets preserve minimum levels of producer incomes during periods of extreme low prices as well as helping maintain milk supply in high-cost, high-demand areas such as the Southeast Federal Order, which, as you know, Southwest Missouri is in. Class I demand is

relatively stable at times when commodity prices decrease dramatically. The safety net policies help maintain class I prices and maintain dairy farmer income.

Along with what Larry said, DFA is going to be very supportive of a class I floor. Because if you look at the way class I milk is priced off commodity markets such as cheese, butter and non-fat, what we are seeing is a major shift in production from East to West. And to maintain the amount of milk we need for consumers on class I markets, we are going to have to somehow floor the price. To attract dairies that want to relocate or dairies that want to stay and produce in the Southeast, we are going to have to send a signal through price that you need to stay in that area. And that is something that the current Farm Bill is not doing, because we are seeing massive increases in production in the West.

The other thing that we can do within the Southeast Federal Order is we need to look at some direct delivery differentials. What we are having a hard time doing is moving milk. Because if you look at the Southeast, most of the milk is produced in Tennessee, Kentucky, Southwest Missouri, and East Texas. And that milk has got to move all the way to South Carolina and Atlanta. So if the Secretary could look at some kind of direct delivery differentials that would certainly help.

Thank you.

MR. FELDMAN: Good afternoon. I am Fred Feldman, from Vernon County Missouri, a farmer there. And I'm on the Soil and Water Conservation District Board as a supervisor and also a director on the Missouri Association Board. I would like to address the comments on question number four on conservation.

The conservation provisions within the 2002 Farm Bill was landmark legislation for conservation funding and for focusing on environmental issues. We would like to see them continued. The Bill represented the single most significant commitment of resources toward conservation on private lands in the nation's history. The Bill is providing excellent conservation programs and funding, which are making a difference. Private landowners in Missouri are benefiting from the voluntary assistance, including cost share, land rental, incentive payments, and technical assistance.

The 2002 Farm Bill places a strong emphasis on the conservation of working lands by ensuring that land remain both healthy and productive, and that the soil and water conservation districts and commission agree with this and have similar goals.

Missouri also, and I think Katherine also covered this, has this 20 years of assistance through the parks and soils tax. Conservation efforts work best through the use of grassroots efforts. Both Missouri and Farm Bill programs were developed using locally led conservation. All of these programs are voluntary, and I think that is something that we probably need to remember as we go along.

Assistance provided through the State and Federal sources have worked together in a partnership effort to address conservation needs in the State. Farm Bill programs that have been of benefit to Missouri include EQIP, WHIP, the Conservation Security Program, which is relatively new. And as of this date, two of those areas are right here where we are at, the Spring River Watershed and the James River Watershed, and I think have offered approximately \$13 million in new contracts through this program.

MS. HUBBARD: Fred, you will need to wrap it up pretty quick.

MR. FELDMAN: Okay. The Farm Bill programs are a good fit for Missouri. The programs were well received, in high demand, and we continue to have a backlog of people interested in participating. I think that is important.

Thank you, sir.

MS. WRIGHT: My name is Pamela Wright, and my husband and I are beekeepers. I am on the executive board of the Missouri Farmers Union.

I want to talk about Country of Origin Labeling, or COOL. It was passed in a previous Farm Bill, but enforcement keeps being postponed. Producers want and need this labeling, and so do consumers. We need to know that the food we eat is grown under our regulations rather than lax regulations or none at all in other places.

Especially I want to talk about the product that my husband and I make, honey. Honey is not even on the list of products that will require COOL labeling. It should be. We want to sell American honey at a good enough price to stay in business. Consumers will choose U.S.A. honey if they know what it is.

The main trouble is Chinese honey. The Chinese put a carcinogenic chemical in their hives to kill parasites. This chemical migrated to the honey. People need to know when they are getting American honey that it does not allow chemicals like this.

I want to emphasize that we need Country of Origin Labeling for producers to help sell our products and for consumers, so they know that their food is safe. Especially add honey to the list.

MS. HUBBARD: Thank you, ma'am.

MR. HARDECKE: I am Howard Hardecke. I am a local beef producer in Southwest Missouri, from Bolivar, just up the road here. I am also president of the Missouri Cattlemen's Association.

Secretary Johanns, Congresswoman Emerson, Senator Talent, it certainly is good to welcome you to Southwest Missouri.

As most of you probably already know, within a 100-mile radius of Springfield, there are probably more cows than anyplace in the United States and possibly the world. So I am sure that a lot of the people in this room are part of that beef industry. And I would like to encourage and keep on encouraging you, Secretary, that your Department keeps an emphasis on opening up our export markets.

We know that you have been working very hard with the Japanese. We know that is a difficult, difficult situation. But from our standpoint, we want to encourage you to get that market open. We are hurting badly by not having that market.

We also would encourage you to keep working at other globalization markets, such as the Korean market and the Taiwanese, and even Saudi Arabia and China. As President Bush made his comments a while ago, 95 percent of the consumers of the world are outside of our borders, and we desperately need to expand our markets. And it can only be done through more exports.

Another issue I want to very briefly encourage you to include in the Farm Bill, as was made by another gentleman just a while ago, in Southwest Missouri and in a lot of the State, we have suffered very drastically with a drought this year. The most that most of us have been able to get is some low interest loans. And in most of the farming areas that I am aware of, we try not to borrow a lot of money. We would like to see in the Farm Bill more of an assistance program rather than just low interest loans.

Thank you.

MS. HUBBARD: Thank you, Howard.

Yes, sir.

MR. GRAHAM: Welcome to the Ozarks, Mr. Secretary. I am Bob Graham, treasurer of Timber Community Fire Protection District. We recently received a community development grant to assist us in the construction of a combination firehouse and community center. Our district covers 136 square miles in northern Shannon and southern Dent County, and includes 20 miles of the upper Current River, which is part of the Ozark National Scenic Riverways of the National Park Service. The park attracts in excess of a million and a half visitors per year.

In addition to providing fire protection services, we provide primary emergency medical service to visitors and to residents prior to the time that paramedics arrive. That time can be anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour. We operate in an extremely poor area, with employment limited to the forest products industry, tourism and cattle farming. According to the 2000 census, per capita income was \$11,500, and median household income was \$20,800. Our tax revenues for this year will approximate \$8,700, and our insurance premiums are \$5,500. So we rely to a significant extent on fundraising and also grants to fund the rest of our operating budget.

Rural Development has been very effective in assisting us over the years, and at just the right time that we have needed it. We have received several other grants since our inception at just the right time, which enabled us to achieve a class 9 ISO rating.

The importance of Rural Development and the community facilities grant for communities such as ours and for organizations such as ours is critical to enable us to provide emergency medical services and fire protection to small communities.

Thank you.

MS. HUBBARD: Thank you.

MS. GATEWOOD: Julia Gatewood, Ozark County, cattle. There are many vital areas of concern when planning the USDA 2007 Farm Bill, such as enough clean water, health care for young farmers and their families, or subsidized additives for machinery fuel to offset the escalating costs for diesel and gasoline used in farming and for hauling hay.

But today I would like to discuss wind power. It seems to me there must be a marriage of the Agriculture Department with the electric utilities sector. Now, many are using electricity manufactured by soft coal, which is mined in Eastern Wyoming and hauled by train to plants as far away as Georgia and Arkansas, where the coal is turned into electricity for our use.

There is a large area in Central Kansas that has wind, lots of wind. Many owners of small farms and ranches are more than willing for the implementation and installation of wind

turbines on their property. But there must be close proximity to a high voltage power line. If there was installation of high voltage power lines, the power from the wind could be converted into a natural resource, for electricity. That inexpensive electricity could be used to power hundreds of homes, farms and ranches throughout the Midwest, including Missouri. Many young farmers would be delighted to find seasonal work installing power lines or wind generators as supplemental income.

Perhaps a consolidation of an area of agriculture with an area of the wind generating industry and the electrical utilities sector may entice young couples to return to rural living. Right now many small towns and rural areas are having to consolidate their schools for a lack of a student population.

When young families leave rural areas to make a living in cities, there goes the tax dollars they could generate. And with our present government reducing taxes for large corporations and the wealthy, it seems imperative to keep many young families on rural farms and ranches to enrich their own lives, keep generating tax dollars to support the economy, and to encourage part-time work in installing and maintaining power lines wind generators that would guarantee clean, low cost --

END OF SIDE A, TAPE ONE.

SPEAKER: This effort is Missouri's tactical step down from the broader Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative. Our vision simply is a diverse landscape, including a component of early successional habitat capable of sustaining quail population levels found in the 1980's.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input at this Forum. And since we plan to submit a comprehensive written comment prior to your deadline, my comments will be brief.

Providing input to public policy, particularly to USDA programs that can benefit quail, is one of our most strategic activities. We are aware of and very much appreciate the USDA intentions to benefit bobwhite quail through the provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill. We especially appreciated the recent offering of the CP-33 Practice bobwhite buffers.

We have already documented CP-33, increasing bobwhite numbers fourfold over unbuffered fields after just the first planting season.

MS. HUBBARD: Jeff, I am going to ask you to wrap your comments up pretty quick.

SPEAKER: Okay. Our written comments will be seeking and providing a rationale for a number of points. A strong conservation title in the 2007 Farm Bill will benefit everyone. Farmers and ranchers benefit from additional income from programs like CRP and CSP. And the public benefits by having better water quality and improved soil.

Thank you very much.

MR. WESTFALL: Thank you. And thank you, Mr. Secretary, Congresswoman Emerson and Senator Talent, for being here. I am Morris Westfall. I operate a farm north of

here in the small town of Hathaway, Missouri. I can give directions to it like you gave directions to your hometown, but in the interest of time...

I am former State director of ASCS for USDA. I am also speaking on behalf of Brad Epperson, the State director of FSA from 1993 to 2001. Consequently, I will probably try to read from a script.

We would like to address the issue of county FSA office closure. We thank Senator Talent and you for listening to Senator Talent, and temporarily putting that aside, but that issue has a history of resurrecting itself. We fell in love with the system during our tenure there, the county office, dedication of the employees and the county committee system. It does not do much good to have a farm program if you do not have the structure to deliver it.

Now, we recognize that a few offices could be closed, but not one-third or even a fourth of them. Missouri has already closed 16. Small farmers and those who are not computer literate will suffer the most. Many farmers who are computer literate still have a need for individual explanation of programs because of the complexity of the programs. Furthermore, it may be impractical to make a special trip to a regional office when it is in the opposite direction from one's normal trade center.

We suggest that you analyze the Washington, D.C.-based staff for efficiency. And we do not mean that as a smart-aleck comment. I really do not. I know you get too much of that. But our friends, who have worked at both KSCMO in Kansas City and FSA in Washington tell us that the productivity per employee is not even comparable. Kansas City outperforms them. We can also tell you that the response to State office questions has deteriorated over time, and has deteriorated greatly in the last 15 years.

Another major suggestion is how about closing some small State offices and serve their counties with a regional State office? A regional office would not reduce service to farmers. And we have counties in Missouri with a larger workload, more acres of cropland, more livestock, than entire States.

Time is running out, but we would ask that as a policy is developed that you listen to some input or request some input from farmers, producers, ranchers, and county office employees.

Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

MS. HUBBARD: Thank you, Mr. Westfall.

MS. HENDERSON: Good afternoon. My name is Jill Henderson. I am from Howell County. I am a small, community-supported agriculture farmer.

Earlier, in the beginning and the opening statements, I heard a lot of words, like "health," "safe," "safety," and how we need to have those things in our soil, in our air, and in our water. We have a very delicate topography here in South Central Missouri. It is called karst topography. It is very porous.

In Southeastern Missouri, tailings from lead mines, such as Doe Run, are being spread across farm fields, agricultural fields where livestock graze and crops are raised. Now, to my understanding, lead is a very toxic component. And we have spent countless taxpayer dollars trying to clean lead out of homes, businesses, soil. So why on earth are we spreading these

tailings across agricultural land? I know they are said to contain lime. And lime is expensive and it is supposed to be a much more affordable alternative to agricultural lime, but it is dangerous.

I know Ms. Emerson has been involved in some of these things, and perhaps Mr. Talent as well. But I would like to ask you to ban the spreading of all mine tailings across agricultural land in Missouri and in the United States of America.

Thank you.

MR. MURRAY: Greetings from the members of White River Valley Electrical Cooperative. My name is Sy Murray. And my question that I would like you to give an answer to is: How can Federal rule in farm programs provide effective assistance in rural areas?

The answer is: Rural economic development loans and the grants program. This program allows us to provide needed capital for projects that normally would not happen in rural communities. Our two most recent applications are in very small communities. Without the zero percent interest program, these projects will not happen.

One is in Sparta, Missouri, a town of 1,100. It will create eight new jobs. The other is in Ozark County, which has a population of 9,500 people. This program will help create 50 new jobs and turn around a negative pull factor, which is where there is more money going out of the county than there is coming into it, and provide the county residents a local trading option. This will also increase sales tax dollars into the county. We are also working on a combination of a loan and grant program for a hospital that will allow the cooperative to create our own revolving loan fund.

Many of our cooperative members say that they work in agriculture. They are farmers, ranchers and dairymen. However, many of them have to work a second job to provide their health care, their retirement, educate their children, and enhance their farm income. With the continuation, or perhaps a few more million dollars, into the Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants Program, hopefully we can provide more second jobs for our rural citizens.

By providing more of these dollars, we will also keep the USDA employees working. We are very lucky to have Jerry Finley and his knowledgeable staff support to provide us guidance in these projects. Nathan Chitwood, and now Mat Moore, up in Columbia, have been very great assets in helping us put together these Rural Development programs and projects that give us a good opportunity to bring the money back into Southwest Missouri.

Thank you very much.

MS. HUBBARD: Thanks, Mr. Murray.

Yes, sir.

MR. SPENCE: My name is Terry Spence. I am a farmer from Northeast Missouri, up near the Iowa line. It was a good, long drive down here today. I want to say thank you to the Secretary and Congresswoman Emerson and the Senator for being here today to listen to the concerns.

I will be submitting comments, but I will kind of relate back to a former speaker. I think we have a real issue here with concentration and control in our markets. And considering our global trade, I think we have to really look at who benefits and who loses in this global trade.

I, as a producer, know who controls the biggest share of the slaughter cattle and production in this country, who controls the poultry, and who controls the pork. So I am not certain on our global trade that we as farmers are benefiting from that. I do not believe that USDA understands and hears the cries of the farmers that have a true passion and heritage to stay on those farms. We are not a part of this whole segment. It is not filtering down to us.

So I think that is something that really has to be addressed in our next Farm Bill. We have to get away from the international corporations that are controlling the whole aspect of our markets, our control. We need markets in our localities. We need slaughter plants. We need programs such as our school lunch programs that are produced locally instead of across the other part of the world.

I will be sending in comments, but I think that is the biggest issue facing us. We are being put out of business on a daily basis just because we cannot compete and we are not independent any longer. We do not want to be serfs in industry, and that is about what we have become, working for corporations that own our animal and livestock production.

In closing, I would just like to say I see several children, or young people, here today in their FFA jackets, the Future Farmers of America. I do not have an answer for them. I hope you do. Because I don't know where they have a place, the way this country is headed in our agricultural production.

Thank you very much and I appreciate you being here.

MS. TUBBS: I am Sharon Tubbs, from Salem, Missouri, in economic development. And I would like to speak to you about rural economic development.

Salem is a small community of 5,000 population, 15,000 in the county, near the population center of the nation, with a real quality of life, in the center of the Ozarks. We have an overriding challenge, though, to create a strong economy, with only per capita income of \$20,000, well below the State and the nation.

But Rural Development has been a real partner for us. In 1995, we became a Champion Community and outlined community goals, many of those, which we have achieved, and much of it with the help from Rural Development. This last year, after we were able to have a telecommunications resource center and a satellite campus with the university, we asked for some help with tourism development and received it.

We have made use of those funds very effectively to market our community to the world, and put a World Wide Web access up and a lot of marketing that draws people to our community. When people come to our community, they know they would like to return there to invest in it. And many of them do come there and open businesses or live there.

Rural Development has invested in our community wisely through the use of community facilities grants. And we now have a state-of-the-art, up-to-date visitors center, a very successful farmer's market, and a teacher's resource center that supplies materials to the school that would otherwise not be funded.

We have been very happy to be the partner. And we just challenge you to continue to give support to a small, rural community, where we can multiply those dollars and become more effective in the long run.

I have worked with public entities for 40 years, with university outreach and now economic development, and I want to say that Rural Development has been the most effective, user-friendly partner that I have had in 40 years of service.

MS. HUBBARD: You were saying earlier today that you had been to 22 of these. I think this makes your 22nd one. And you really have had great comments about the Rural Development program.

SEC. JOHANNNS: So far, it is unanimous. Rural Development has yet to have a negative comment in any Forum I have done. So we have got another couple of hours here.

MS. HUBBARD: I know. I may be jinxing this.

SEC. JOHANNNS: But it has been unbelievable.

MS. HUBBARD: Go ahead, sir.

MR. STILL: Good afternoon. My name is Roger Still. And while I am the executive director of Audubon, Missouri, I am here today representing the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative, or MOBCI.

MOBCI consists of 36 different conservation organizations, united in working cooperatively with private citizens to conserve game and non-game birds alike. MOBCI includes chapters in nearly every national conservation organization operating in Missouri, groups working exclusively in Missouri, and State and Federal agencies. Nearly all of MOBCI's member organizations have specific projects that work to enhance bird populations through Farm Bill programs on private lands, while simultaneously enhancing the quality of life for people on that land.

Today, our coalition is asking that the present Farm Bill conservation programs continue into the 2007 Farm Bill and to at least maintain the present level of funding. We should note especially that the CRP is of special importance because it is restoring grassland habitat on a scale that no other program could ever match.

We are also suggesting that the cropping eligibility dates for CRP be the same as the 2002 Farm Bill. This will help address unintended consequences of CRP enrollment, which can sometimes inadvertently incentivize landowners to crop out native prairies, woodlands and wetlands.

Finally, we suggest that CSP be used to target crops that may face reductions in commodity price supports because of World Trade Organization agreements.

In closing, I would just also say that I recently had the privilege of attending the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation. And the conservation title of the Farm Bill I think is one of those areas in which that kind of cooperative conservation takes place nearly every day in Missouri and across the country.

Thank you.

MR. VINCENT: I am Earl Vincent. I am the environmental program director for the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute at the University of Missouri.

Secretary, Congresswoman Emerson and Senator Talent, animal agriculture is facing increasing pressure in the form of environmental regulation and legal action as our growing urban population and expanding retirement communities move into rural areas. Two major coordinated thrusts are needed to maintain the viability of animal agriculture and rural communities. First is an expanded education in urban and rural communities that uses science to illustrate both the opportunities and the limitations that must be addressed to find alternative approaches to urban and rural environmental issues.

Second is expanded use of the innovative alternatives component of EQIP to facilitate rural community and farmer cooperation to meet the challenge of growing urban and retirement community pressures. In the coming years, the Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma quad-State region has the potential to be either an example of cooperative solutions or an environmental battleground. I encourage you to help this region achieve the example solution.

Thank you.

MR. HEARST: Good afternoon. My name is Blake Hearst. I am a row crop farmer and a greenhouse farmer from Tarkio, Missouri, and also vice president of the Missouri Farm Bureau, the State's largest farm organization. We thank you for holding these hearings and letting farmers tell you what they need in the 2007 Farm Bill.

Regrettably, the landscape of agriculture has changed considerably since the 2002 Farm Bill. We have had a tremendous drought, a tremendous increase in production of cost due to rising energy prices. The hurricanes this summer have caused disruptions in barge traffic and increased basis for farmers throughout the Midwest Basin. And to add insult to injury, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have closed two manmade spring rises on the Missouri River in 2006.

Farm bureaus and landowners have pointed out time and time again that the lower Missouri River already experiences a natural spring rise, and a manmade spring rise increases the likelihood our State's most productive farmland will be flooded and increases the cost of transporting both fertilizer and grain.

The Missouri Farm Bureau will not finalize our policy until this fall, but I think I can safely say that farmers in the Missouri Farm Bureau strongly support the 2002 Farm Bill and would like to see the 2007 Farm Bill continue the same level of funding. But the Farm Bill is only one part of the puzzle. We need to work very hard in international trade. Our ability to compete in the global marketplace will be greatly affected by WTO. As Jo Ann said, we must not unilaterally disarm in the trade negotiations.

Also, transportation is very important to farmers. We would like to see the locks and dams improved on the Mississippi River.

Finally, energy costs are a huge issue for farmers. On my own farm in Northwest Missouri, we have seen the price of anhydrous ammonia go from \$250 a ton to \$500 a ton, a cost to my family of almost \$50,000.

I see that I am about to run out of time, just like your Huskers did a couple of weeks ago.

(Laughter.)

SEC. JOHANNIS: Yes.

(Laughter.)

MS. HUBBARD: A cheap shot.

(Laughter.)

MR. HEARST: Thank you very much for holding these hearings. And thank you for coming.

SEC. JOHANNIS: Yes. Thanks.

(Laughter.)

MR. MOFFETT: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. My name is Steve Moffett, and I am here representing the Nature Conservancy here in Missouri. You probably know, the Nature Conservancy is a fairly large national organization, but we have got 15,000 members right here in Missouri. We wanted to thank you, thank Congresswoman Emerson, and Senator Talent, for holding this kind of a session, to allow us to make our comments and give input on the 2007 Farm Bill proposal.

It is pretty easy to summarize where our comments are coming from, as we follow a lot of the other speakers. Our overall approach is that conservation measures and incentives are absolutely critical here in Missouri to protect agriculture, our lands, our environment, and our economy. We strongly support these measures to be placed in the 2007 Farm Bill and continue to be supported.

We are going to submit some more formal comments later on, but a few key items have to do with maintaining habitat-friendly agriculture and forestry here in Missouri, and increased funding available for long-term easement programs on working lands, the threat of invasive species is always ongoing, and the threats that those invasive species pose to agriculture, forests and our natural habitats. We would like to make sure we target conservation programs to ensure that they contribute measurably to improving the health of our lands and our ecosystems.

Water resources promote and encourage practices that restore and improve water quality and water quantity in our watersheds. And in stewardship and management, improve incentives for landowners engaged in long-term adaptive management in order to promote more natural processes for the benefit of our native ecosystems here in Missouri.

Now, again, I really commend you and thank you, we do as an organization, for taking this much time. Thank you.

MR. LUDWIG: Mr. Secretary, I want to welcome you to Missouri. I am Dale Ludwig. I work for the Missouri Soybean Association and I also farm, raising corn, soybeans and beef cattle.

I would like to comment on Rural Development, and my comments too are very positive. As a matter of fact, as I look to some of the answers for agriculture, and certainly rural Missouri, Rural Development and value-added agriculture are what I believe are a number of the answers

for the future of agriculture. If you look at the soybean industry in the State of Missouri, nothing has the opportunity to do more than renewable fuels, or specifically biodiesel. And I am glad that Mr. Talent made it back, because there is nobody in this country that has done more for biodiesel and renewable fuels than Mr. Talent has. I want to thank you for all your efforts in doing that.

But we need to continue that effort. And there are a whole bunch of different areas that we can also support value-added agriculture in. And it is absolutely critical that we can continue our support for Rural Development and value-added grants through Rural Development. So that is something that we believe is important in the future Farm Bill.

If you take a look at some of the other areas, I would like to also compliment Ms. Emerson for her visionary support of functional food type projects that will, long-term, address a number of different areas, including health care costs, but also fit right into value-added agriculture and having rural America agriculture addressing health care costs long-term.

Now, with all those things said, there are a few other things that we need to make sure that we do not do harm to in the whole process, and that is animal agriculture in this country. They are our largest customer for corn and soybeans. We need to make sure we are doing positive things to help animal agriculture, and make sure we are not doing anything that would harm those.

The bottom line is we support the current Farm Bill and would encourage you to continue a like-type bill as well as that amount of funding.

Thank you very much.

MR. GARDNER: Welcome to Missouri, Secretary. My name is John Gardner. I am the vice president for research and economic development at the University of Missouri System in Columbia, Missouri, in Boone County.

I too am here to talk about question five, that being Rural Development. Because I would submit that, in these forums, these two dozen or so forums and the people that you see here before you today, you not only see the nation's farmers but you also see really the nation's strategic reserve of entrepreneurs. By any metric, whether it is self-employment, start-ups, or any other metric you want to look at, rural America feeds the entrepreneurs not only in rural America but of urban America as well. So these Rural Development programs for that needed infrastructure are what is keeping the heart blood of this nation's business going, and keeping us in a global economy part of the edge of innovation, which is probably one of the few edges that we are going to have left in the future.

We in Missouri are very proud of our Rural Development program. It is ably run. They distributed more than, I believe, \$580 million this past year on very needed projects. Among those projects, it went to deserving farmers, cooperatives, businesses, water districts, and municipalities across this State. Some of them, a small portion, also went to the University of Missouri and its College of Ag Food and Natural Resources.

For instance, in Congresswoman Emerson's district, some of it went to help one of our experiment stations down near Portageville, Missouri. Earlier this week we broke ground and a very important check was cut in Northwest Missouri, up at our Huntley-Wheely Farm. And it goes on and on at our locations across the State. So it is one part of your agency working with

another, where the synergy is happening and one plus one is equaling more than two. We appreciate that, and we would ask you to continue that funding.

Thank you.

MS. HUBBARD: Yes, sir.

MR. SULLIVAN: My name is John Sullivan. I am the secretary and general manager for Water District 3 of Howell County, Missouri.

I also add my voice to the chorus of those that appreciate the efforts that have been made by Rural Development for the improvement of life in rural America. A face on Water District 3 is the face of rural America. We started in 1996, pumping our first gallon of water. This was provided through the sole support of Rural Development. The system has over 150 miles of line, serving 185 square miles of northern Howell County. We serve churches and daycare. We serve battered women's shelters. We serve farms and ranches, trailers, one log cabin, and very exclusive homes.

The system works. However, we have a problem developing. And you knew you would have to have somebody on question five. The mandates that come through the Safe Drinking Water Act, through the Environmental Protection Agency, down through our primacy agency of the Department of Natural Resources, all end up requiring more and more out of small systems, which make up the majority of this nation. And yet, there is a dichotomy between what the standards are at Rural Development and what is being expected through legislation.

We ask that it start at the top and that the direction be given to sit down not only to talk but to resolve the differences that these standards and specifications have.

Thank you for your time, sir. We appreciate it.

MR. MORTON: I am Wayne Morton. I am from Marceline, Missouri. And I raise grain on my farm. And I also own about 250 mother cows in a cow-calf operation. Today, I also represent the Missouri Prairie Foundation and the Grassland Coalition. This is a collection of 23 Missouri organizations.

Generally, I feel that the current conservation programs are good. I have land in CRP, GRP, WHIP programs, and EQIP programs. All of these programs encourage me to do what every good landowner wants. That is, to leave the land in better shape when he leaves it than when he bought it.

CRP and GRP decrease the use of fossil fuels, support grain prices, help the environment through cleaner air and water, and support conservation. Coupled with incentives, they can also lend to extra farm income through hunting and ecotourism. WHIP and EQIP programs should be targeted towards improving the land for fertility and conservation purposes. The only fault with the programs that I can think of is the rare occasion when farmers take land out of production, then break out grassland, especially prairie land, to farm. This needs to be stopped.

I feel that the reason young farmers and ranchers have a hard time entering the business is because of land availability and cost of land. A healthy CRP program has each piece of land becoming available every 10 to 15 years for young farmers. And especially if this land was in warm season grasses, the fertility of this land is significantly better than the day it was enrolled. The reason grassland is so expensive depends less on the price of cattle than the amount

speculators are willing to pay for it to turn it into 10-acre ranchettes and strip malls. A good GRP program, especially if it's in permanent easement, will make the land affordable to young cattlemen.

Of all the programs, please do not cut the CRP, and expand the GRP, both for the future of farming and for conservation.

Thank you.

MR. OATS: Hello. My name is Bryce Oats. I am from Calloway County, Missouri. And I am very active in the Missouri Farmers Union. I would like to talk with you about two things today. One has already been mentioned previously, but I would like to expand that a little bit.

First, beginning farmers like me need help in establishing competitive markets here in this country. There has been some talk about competition in the international marketplace but very little here at home. One thing you could do to make those competitive markets open is to build a strong competition title into the 2007 Farm Bill that does two things. First, ban meatpackers from owning livestock. And second, enact the captive supplier reform proposals that have been proposed in the U.S. Senate and the House.

There is another thing that you can do that would definitely help out beginning farmers like me. And that is to help us to harness the emerging interest, and well-established interest really, in natural and local foods here in this country. The Value-Added Development Grants Program puts pieces in place that people like us can use to build businesses around that model.

The second program that has been very successful, and hopefully will achieve more funding in the future, is the Community Food Projects Grants Program and the Food Security Program. That is a great one.

The third thing I would like you to think about, which has not been done specifically up to this point, is to provide capital for a revolving loan fund that would target that type of development for rural Missouri and rural America in general, so that there would be money available to build facilities. Because that is one thing we lack is money for infrastructure for development of a local food system.

Thank you for your time.

MS. HUBBARD: You guys are doing a great job of keeping on time today. Yes.

MS. MATTHEWS: Hello. My name is Stephanie Matthews, and I am representing the Missouri FFA Association.

The average age of the U.S. farmer is 56 years old. Unless we consider the challenges facing today's people wanting to enter into production agriculture, there will be fewer and fewer people in control of the American food supply.

I grew up on a family farm. My parents' full-time job is raising cattle on our 5,000 acres. So I know firsthand the challenges in a production agriculture life. And from where I stand, the leading challenge facing young agriculture producers is gaining the needed capital to start a farm and managing the risks that come with it.

To encourage and help the next generation of farmers, I believe that we could continue supporting programs that allow young farmers the opportunity to gain the needed capital to start their farms. A loan program that could be paid off over the years, with a high loan-to-value ratio and low interest rates, would be extremely helpful. A farm loan program would be beneficial not just to first-generation farmers but to continuing farmers.

I come from a family of five children, most of whom are older than me. I know that when my dad retires, not one of us could afford his farm or his assets, no matter how much we desire to continue on the family farm. With the high cost of land, machinery and livestock, it is easy to understand why there are so few people entering into production agriculture today. With that, I believe that a loan program to assist young farmers in entering into production agriculture would be the most practical thing at this time.

With that, I would like to thank all of you for being here today, and wish everyone the best of luck.

MS. HUBBARD: It is nice to have the blue and gold jackets here today.

(Applause.)

MR. OBERLY: My name is Frank Oberly, and I am from Pure Air, which is close to Kirksville, Missouri. I am here on behalf of grasslands.

Actually, within a few short miles from here is the rarest of all ecosystems that exists in North America. Missouri leads the nation in farmable prairies. And within a few miles from here, the greatest concentration of prairies in North America exists just a short distance from here, and there are a few further north. These prairies are America's legacy to what made this nation the most powerful and greatest agricultural producer in the world. It is the prairies and the prairie soils that made us who we are.

And I am here to say that I understand the reason we are losing these prairies today. They are still plowing prairies in Missouri and building poultry houses on them. And it should not be, because they are the rarest of all ecosystems. We need to get into this Farm Bill, we need to put in there rewards to these landowners for being good managers, not waiting until they plow them up and give them low deficiency payments when they convert them into crop production.

Missouri is the greatest prairie State we have. And I really emphasize that GRP, especially in Missouri, should be given to these landowners. Because I believe it is a heritage for us and I believe it is something that reflects on us as a nation, if we are one nation under God, how we are our stewards with what God has given us for future generations.

MS. HUBBARD: At this time, we are going to take a short 10-minute break. If you are in line, look in front of you and behind you and remember your place, and we will come back in 10 minutes.

(Break.)

END OF SIDE B, TAPE ONE.

MR. STEEVER: -- in that same place, because we would hate for you to lose your place after you have waited this long to give some testimony.

My name is Tom Steever, and I am with Brownfield, America's Ag News Source. We are on 273 stations in six different States. We are based just up the road, in Jefferson City, Missouri. And it is my pleasure to be here today on this last stop for Secretary Johanns on his series of Farm Bill Listening Sessions.

We have three lines here, and you all know the rules. So we are going to watch the lights. If you do not get to watch them, I will watch them for you. You have two minutes to speak, but you have all heard that. So let's keep going with testimony.

Roy, it is your turn.

MR. KRAMER: My name is Russ Kramer. I am a family farmer from Osage County, Missouri, Secretary. I raise hogs, cattle and diversified crops, and I am the president of the Missouri Farmers Union. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being here, and distinguished guests. And I too want to compliment not only the USDA Rural Development but also FSA and the NRCS, the most effective delivery system that we have, a very efficient system of government. We applaud them, and thanks for putting a halt to the closure of the FSA offices.

I want to, first of all, commend Stephanie, who gave a great presentation on behalf of the youth. And I too want to talk about youth. As a former FFA advisor, a Young Farmer advisor, I want to talk on behalf of our most precious resource for rural areas and our most precious resource for the future, and that is our young people. And I appreciate them being here. They are our future, and they certainly have some barriers. I feel that the key to all this and the key for them to entering into rural areas and into agriculture is access. And one thing Stephanie talked about was access to credit.

Mr. Secretary, I had a really good meeting with the board of directors of the Farm Credit Administration about a month ago. And I was encouraged by what they said as far as they are focusing on programs of reinvestment into rural areas, more community-based type lending, investing directly into things such as broadband Internet and other telecommunication services for family farmers and rural residents. I think that is a plus.

I think too they need to restructure their system. Instead of having a tiered system that basically discourages and puts burdens on young, beginning, minority, and underserved farmers, that it should go the other way around. They should get a break. They should have some sort of encouragement or benefit of the doubt that they need assistance as long as there is a good marketing program in place. They need access to markets.

Again, I am going to compliment USDA Rural Development assistance, the Value-Added Grant Programs, et cetera. I think a program can be put in place that would, again, encourage or give some sort of incentive that allows a young person to take part in a new generation cooperative; in other words, some sort of a tax break, et cetera.

MODERATOR: Russ, we will have to have you wrap it up.

MR. KRAMER: All right. Basically, again, I encourage the view that young people are our future. I think we have to give them incentives. And that we are the solution to the problems with energy, with food and agriculture, and the youth are certainly a big part of that.

Thank you.

MR. SCHRODER: My name is Rick Schroder. I am from Joplin, Missouri, Southwest Missouri. I am a real estate developer. I develop single-family and multi-family homes in Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma. I want to first compliment the rural development staff here in Missouri. They have been very helpful and very knowledgeable for any questions or concerns we have.

We have developed over 200 single-family homes over the years and over 1,200 multi-family units throughout Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma. The single-family house, as a direct program and a guarantee program, has been a very efficient and a very good program. The 515 Multi-Family Program has been very beneficial to rural areas. It has been very, very important for these areas, because it is the only program offered in rural areas, where most of these areas are made up of people that make minimum wage or barely above that. So it serves the very, very low-income people and also the elderly.

There are two very important things that I want to address. One is that most of these multi-family complexes that were developed are aging. They are 25 to 30 years old. And when you have a property that basically has been operated on a break-even basis, you do not have the money stashed away to take care of capital needs or accessibility issues.

We manage close to 50 properties that were developed by not-for-profit entities, basically the communities that have these issues, and do not have the reserves or the money to take care of these issues. And it is very, very important. Under the current funding level, it is about 20 or 30 properties in the whole nation that can be taken care of by that. That needs to be increased.

Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Yes, sir.

MR. HILGEDICK: Good afternoon. My name is Terry Hilgedick. I am a Boone County, Missouri farmer, and I also serve as president of the Missouri Corn Growers Association. I farm with my brother and father in Central Missouri. On our Boone County farm, we grow soybeans, corn, wheat, and watermelons. I want to thank you for conducting the hearing, and I appreciate your appearance here today.

As you know, access to global markets is critical to corn production. As the administration moves forward with the Doha Round of the WTO negotiations, you must ensure that the farm safety net remains in place for American farmers. The price support provided by the current Farm Bill policy is critical to our ability to continue to raise corn.

We must also ensure that the transportation systems, of rivers, rails and roads, that gives the U.S. our competitive advantage is not neglected as foreign market access is enhanced. Grainbelt agriculture relies on the efficient, low-cost transportation provided by the river systems.

We ask the administration, the U.S. Congress and the Army Corps of Engineers to ensure that the Missouri River be managed for transportation and flood control, and that the Mississippi River system is allocated the money necessary to upgrade its outdated and decaying

infrastructure. Our expanded WTO involvement, coupled with a shaky commitment to improving our own competitive advantage, is a recipe for disaster.

The Missouri Corn Growers Association strongly supports the Farm Bill's market development programs. The development of farmer-owned ethanol plants is one of the brightest spots in market development. We attribute this success to the entrepreneurial spirit of American farmers and the assistance that lies within the Farm Bill. Programs such as the CCC bioenergy program have been instrumental in developing ethanol plants and should be fully funded.

In addition, the development of additional market development programs should be stressed in the Farm Bill. USDA Value-Added Producer Grants, which have encouraged the development of farmer-owned ventures, provides a good template for future programs.

Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

I just want to take a second and recognize Fred Ferrel, our Commissioner of Agriculture here in the State of Missouri. Fred is right back there, and he has been visiting with producers as well. Give us a wave Fred.

(Applause.)

MODERATOR: Thank you.

MR. CLARK: Good afternoon, sir. My name is Floyd Clark. I am a representative from Shannon County to the Top of the Ozarks RC&D Council. And today I am representing the Missouri Association of RC&D's. I am addressing the enhancement of rural economic growth.

To the best of my knowledge, the RC&D program is the only Federal program where projects are determined at the local level by rural communities. It is an extremely important program. And within the four elements listed in the Farm Bill, no two communities have exactly the same set of specific needs. As a result, the specific projects worked on can and do vary from one RC&D council to the next. And they may not include all the four elements.

There are a number of widely successful programs addressing the four elements. Where RC&D's come in is the ability to put together a mix of the resources, the assets, the funding sources, and the sources of expertise, with the education to fill in the gaps that are always left when programs are designed to fit the whole country or a region.

RC&D Councils should be evaluated as any other program that expends taxpayers' money. As no two councils are the same, this becomes an arduous task. What has to be guarded against is an attempt to evaluate based on much simpler criteria, the things that are easier to count: acres, miles, determining whether or not the actions of the councils meet the national goals as set by the President or the administration.

I cannot stress enough the importance of continuing this program in the next Farm Bill, and continuing sufficient funding so that the remainder of rural communities can have the assistance of an RC&D Council.

Thank you.

MS. LEDGERWOOD: Good afternoon. My name is Charli-Jo Ledgerwood. I live in Cassville, Missouri. I would like to address two of the points: achievement of environmental goals and effective assistance in rural areas.

I would submit that both of those can be achieved through continuing funding for the water and sewer development programs, both loan and grant. I have been associated with two start-up projects. The first was very similar to Mr. Sullivan, who spoke right before the break. And I will not go into the details of that, except to add that, at the time that we initiated that project, we were still helping people out that were drinking from springs or hauling water, either to a low-producing well or to tanks at their homes. So that was a project that was well received, and without Rural Development's assistance would not have been possible.

Secondly, I am currently involved with a project near Branson, Missouri, in a rapidly developing area. And we certainly see, with the impact on Table Rock Lake, the importance of environmental protection, both from an economic point of view and from a resource for water drinking. So we would encourage you to continue those efforts.

I would like to applaud our local staff. They are a tremendous help, and the program works great. As long as you will just keep funding it, it works very well.

Thirdly, I am on the board of directors for the Missouri Rural Water Association. The Missouri Rural Water Association gives technical assistance and training on site to small systems. And that is a very important role that they play in a non-regulatory, helpful manner. Representative Emerson and Senator Talent both have been extremely helpful in helping keep those projects funded through the Farm Bills, and we would appreciate your continued support. Because that is a very important and popular program.

Thank you.

MR. CAVENDAR: Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary. My name is Richard Cavendar, and I am with the Merrimack Regional Planning Commission. We represent eight rural counties and 29 rural cities. Our district is east of here. In fact, Congresswoman Emerson is our Congresswoman, and she does a great job representing us and did a great job representing us today.

I wanted to add my voice to the support for Rural Development programs. They are essential to our rural communities, in developing the infrastructure we need to be able to compete globally and to retain the economic base that we have, and to grow that: everything from housing to sewer and water systems to community facilities, business loan programs, even comprehensive planning. In fact, Rural Development is the only Federal agency that supports comprehensive planning. And we need more of that if we are going to spend our money wisely. And with resources as scarce as they are, we need to be doing that.

I just wanted to give you one example. I have put my comments in writing, so I have given you a number of examples in writing, which I will leave at the help desk and also mail to your office in Washington. We are working currently with five communities on sewer and water projects. And in total, Rural Development is investing \$2.5 million in grant funds and \$1.4 million in loan funds. That is generating projects totaling \$9.2 million. So with the local match, with some State funding, we are able to help 861 families. And that is a tremendous benefit to our area.

We appreciate that. And we would like to see that continued. And we appreciate you being here today and listening to all of these comments.

SEC. JOHANNIS: Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. More kudos to Rural Development, it seems.

SEC. JOHANNIS: Yes.

MODERATOR: Yes, over here.

MS. CALVIN: Hello. Good afternoon. My name is Marilyn Calvin. I am a dairy producer from Mount Vernon. I also represent about 80 dairy farm families from my district on the DFA Southeast Council. And I serve on the Lawrence County FSA Committee.

I am sure you have probably already guessed that you are in the heart of dairy country here in Springfield. And most of the dairy production here in Missouri is in this area. But if you look at the statistics of the national dairy scene and the numbers that are coming out, Missouri is losing a larger percent of milk production and dairy cows than any of the 20 top dairy States in the United States.

We would really like to tell you that we appreciate your support and President Bush's support of the Milk Income Loss Program. This program has been very, very vital to the dairy farm families in our part of the State. It has helped many people stay in business, many young people stay in the dairy business. And the \$2.4 million cap has been very, very helpful to all of us. We would like to encourage your support of this program through 2007.

Also, many people have made a comment about the drought in our area. We have had many counties in our area with a severe drought. And so far, the only programs we have are the low interest loan program and the waterline and waters and wells programs. Lawrence County is a big livestock county. We have the largest number of cattle in the State. And we would like to see some kind of program for some kind of drought assistance.

Our corn yields, we have set our county yield at 50 bushels per acre. We are seeing yields between mostly 10 and 60 bushels per acre. So that just gives you an idea of the severity of the drought. And we appreciate your support.

MODERATOR: Over here, sir.

MR. DANIEL: Hello. My name is Chuck Daniel. I am involved in a three-generation family farm in Dade County, Missouri. And what I want to address is the inequities in LDP.

And we are part of this drought problem too. Our corn averaged about 40 bushels, so we had a 42 cent LDP, so that is \$16. So if we would have had a normal yield of 100-plus, we would have gotten triple that. I hope in the next Farm Bill you can kind of equalize that to where we do not get punished for having low prices and low yield also.

Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Over here, sir.

MR. HAYES: Yes, my name is Bud Hayes, and I am the executive director of Kaysinger Basin Regional Planning Commission, one of the 19 in the State, representing seven counties, and 51 towns and cities within those seven counties. The population size of those cities run from 37 to just under 10,000. So you can see that the communities are small, all in need of assistance.

I am here to commend the efforts of Rural Development in the State of Missouri, the local office up to the State office. They have been most helpful and most cooperative and informative in assisting us to help our cities.

I would like to also encourage -- and I guess the congressional delegation is not here -- but encourage increased funding for Rural Development in those programs, particularly those that assist communities. Two of those that have most helpful are the Rural Business Enterprise Grants. They have been most helpful, but there is very limited funding. They have funded such things as early warning systems and the start up of revolving funds for businesses, which, by the way, we are involved in doing that as well.

We also were granted rural assistance monies to put on a one-day business conference in our region for small businesses, start-up businesses. This is the third year we have done that, and very successfully. And I am going to leave some information about that.

Again, I commend you for coming out and listening to the country. Thank you.

MS. CRYSTAL: My name is Linda Crystal, and I am the director of economic development in Sedalia. Secretary Johanns, first, congratulations on your appointment as U.S. Secretary of Ag. And I apologize in advance if I mess up and call you Governor.

Agriculture and rural economic development are key to the success of the economy of the Midwest and our nation. In Nebraska, you and I witnessed the diversity of the economy between the East and the West. As an economic developer in Sedalia, I continue to look for ways to build on rural economic development. The challenges are great. We compete globally. Companies struggle, as does the farmer.

As you know, you and I witnessed the rural economic development program built on retention. It was key in saving a 700-plus employee vise grip factory in a 500 population community in De Witt, Nebraska. Please continue to enhance that program for us.

In relation to agriculture and farming assistance, please continue to create and grow programs to provide opportunities to enhance agriculture income within rural communities. Joint ventures are necessary. Additional programs must be created for education and technical assistance for small business development, to build community capacity, leadership programs, and entrepreneurial programs to stop population and outmigration.

Entrepreneurial development assistance will provide small communities another way to add to the viability of the rural economy. Value-added ag is emerging, and we must do all we can to stimulate and encourage growth in this area.

And on another note, it does not surprise me that you have held 22 forums. After all, you and Stephanie visited by car every county in Nebraska when you were running for Governor of Nebraska. You then revisited them after your election. The only difference is Stephanie is not here. Please give her my best. And by the way, Sedalia is straight north of Lincoln, Missouri.

SEC. JOHANNIS: Thank you.

MR. BUCKNER: I am Charles Buckner. I am on a farm that is a five-generation dairy farm, and Green County Farm Bureau president. The Farm Bureau supports MILC extension to the 2007 Farm Bill, with a 2.4 billion pound cap. And in Green County everybody talks about the small farmer. In Green County, we had 600 dairies 12 years ago. Today, we have 16 dairies left in Green County. So we want to extend that cap and keep the cap at 2.4 billion pounds. The Farm Bureau supports that. That way it will not be all the milk production going out West.

Another issue I have with USDA regulations is on the Mad Cow deal. I cannot recall what the name is. But I am dairy farmer and have been. And this year alone I have lost 15 cows to downed cow that spreads out on cement that I cannot even butcher. In this country, they can shoot a deer and shoot him up a couple of times and they can give that food away to the homeless.

Well, why couldn't we do something with a cow that broke a leg? We can't even take them and get them in to butcher them. Why don't they change that rule? There is nothing wrong with the cow that has got a broken leg. If there was, I would not be here the last 50 years. You know what I mean? I am serious about it. This is a serious issue. That is \$7,500 dollars.

We used to be able to inspect those cows. If they were all right and they passed inspection, other than just a broken leg, we could butcher them. But if you can haul them up there in a pickup, it does not make much sense to not be able to at least give it away or let me eat it. But your USDA regulation says that I cannot even eat that cow. And we have lots of cows that gets down.

Thank you for listening. I appreciate you coming.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Yes, sir.

MR. WALKER: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. My name is Westin Walker. And I will first address question number one, as a former high school agriculture teacher of seven years.

The only young lady who received applause today was an FFA member. And I think the world of your boss. I voted for him twice, and I have really tried to pray for him. I mean that. But he does not apparently support vocational education as much as I think he ought to, because that includes agriculture education, which that young lady represents in FFA. So I would like to see how you might prod him along a little bit. I think he will listen to reason. But I think he is looking at things from a grander scheme and not understanding agriculture education where it fits into vocational education.

Secondly, I am a multi-species ruminative producer from Dade County -- beef, sheep, and goats, because I got married into some of that other.

(Laughter.)

MR. WALKER: And she is going to speak here in a minute, so I have got to better be careful.

I am also a Missouri Cattlemen's member and a Farm Bureau member. As a producer, I have utilized some of the NRCS assistance programs, and I appreciate those cost share programs. That addresses question number four.

Question number three, I think that we need to look at new marketing ploys and value-added incentives, including the meat packing plants in Missouri.

Addressing question number two, I am in favor of national ID's, such as the Cattlemen's Association is, not in COOL. And I understand that different entities may have different reasons for that, but you can expand on that. Also addressing question number two is I think that we ought to try to lend support to the Fair Tax Act. That should help us as producers and business owners throughout.

Finally, as a university professor in agriculture education at Missouri State University State, I am a co-principal investigator on a USDA higher ed challenge grant, and I appreciate that. I also encourage the continued support of grants to non-land grant institutions, which we are.

I thank you for your time. I appreciate it.

SEC. JOHANNIS: Thank you.

MODERATOR: Over here.

MR. DAWSON: Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary. It is an honor to have you here in Missouri. My comments come from an economic development perspective related to community development. And we have heard quite a bit about that. I will make my points brief.

My name is Mark Dawson. I am with an investor-owned utility in Kansas City, Aquila. We serve seven States: Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, Michigan, and Minnesota. Combined in those seven States we have over 1.3 million customers. Of those 1.3 million, 700,000 of them are in communities of less than 7,000 people. So we view rural development seriously. It is our business.

The context will come from my years of experience in economic development and also growing up in a small town in the Missouri bootheel. My hometown, like many other rural communities, are at a crossroads in their history. The ability to produce agricultural product continues to expand via new production methodologies, but the ability to foster community growth and diversity has lagged woefully behind. As a result, many communities are losing their biggest natural asset: their young minds that would stay but otherwise have to go for jobs elsewhere.

This is a national concern and one that USDA cannot address alone, but it is an opportunity to use and leverage your programs to help. Our ability to reenergize small, rural communities is vital. Because without this, farming families have to drive long distances for services such as health care, food, products, consumer goods, et cetera.

America has relied for years on the farming backbone as the national infrastructure, but we cannot forget those communities that service the farmers themselves. USDA Rural Development programs, I can say, are addressing several of these concerns. I can think of numerous communities that I work with that have benefited from USDA Rural Development programs -- towns such as Milo, Missouri, a rural development grant for firefighting equipment

for a volunteer fire department, all the way to the Iowa border, Grant City, Missouri, so that they could have a dollar store, so that they could have rural dollars come and stay in there area, to the little community of Allendale.

Many of these have relied on these programs. We do appreciate your staff, and they do an excellent job. And we desperately need to keep young people in our farming communities.

Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Over here.

MS. WALKER: Hi, I'm Beth Walker. I teach at Missouri State University and, as my husband said, we do run a beef farm in Dade County. We have meat sheep, meat goats, and beef cattle, as well as a few horses. What I would like to talk with you today about are domestic terrorist groups, such as ALF, or the Animal Liberation Front, the Earth Liberation Front, or ELF, PETA, the extreme members of PETA, Water Keepers Alliance, SHACK, and Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, of which only 5 percent are actually physicians.

What I am going to talk to you about today are my concerns with always being on a defensive end in agriculture. These groups are funded by donations from American citizens. And I just feel that we need to have more funding so that the producers in Missouri and in the United States have the educational materials that we need to fight against these groups.

As we know, groups such as this have done away with farrowing crates in Florida, essentially doing away with the hog production places in Florida. As of recent, legislation has gone into effect, or soon will be, which will not allow horse slaughter in the United States. Again, these are direct effects, taking away the rights of small farmers and ranchers and large farmers and ranchers in Missouri.

In addition, they terrorize through violent acts businesses, research laboratories and farmers and ranchers throughout the United States. And I would like to have you support more funding so that we can battle these groups.

Thank you.

MR. BERGMAN: Kenny Bergman, a cow-calf producer and agribusinessman from Walnut Grove, Missouri. I would like to address the first issue, young people in agriculture.

I think we can simplify that. Young people will come into production agriculture if we foster an environment that is profitable. Profit is the thing we are searching for in agriculture. We can create that environment through enforcing our antitrust legislation, by creating a safety net, both price-wise and in times of drought, flood and natural disaster. I do not believe that we asked the victims of Rita or Katrina to repay their gifts.

I feel like that as we go forward in agriculture, we need to focus on the concentration. Who gets those dollars from agriculture? When we add value to the product, does that trickle down to the producer? Do they receive any of that, or is it captured by the corporate world?

I appreciate your time today. There are some other products in agriculture, which I would like to mention. I support biodiesel. I support ethanol production. But not all of our

crops are going to be used for those things. And we need to protect the producer, who is the economic engine of this country, the one who takes raw materials and create a product that is useable from it.

Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Yes, sir.

MR. ADCOCK: Mr. Secretary, my name is Lyle Adcock. I am from Plato, Missouri, population 74. We are not able to give nearly as specific directions getting to Plato as you can to your town, but it is generally up in the South Central part of the State.

I am clerk for the Village of Plato, and I also serve as secretary-treasurer for the Plato Fire Department. I also recently retired from a 35-year career in banking. In those capacities, I have had the good fortune to work with USDA on many occasions. Together, we have been able to provide one- to four-family homes, low- to moderate-income apartments, senior citizen housing, and community facilities. We have also helped many farm families start businesses, make transitions from one generation to another, and to work through many difficult times.

Today I would like to comment on how Federal rural programs can provide effective assistance with rural economic growth issues. There is a new TV show this year called "Three Wishes." If you will allow, I would like to make my three wishes as they relate to USDA Rural Development programs.

Before I start wishing, however, I would like to express my gratitude that decisions were made to retain USDA offices in local communities. To be most effective, USDA administrators need to be a part of life in the communities they are serving.

Having said that, my first wish is that USDA staff continue to operate at a local level and stay within the communities in which they have a vested interest.

My second wish would be that current proven and successful programs be continued. Without those programs, many rural communities would be without water systems, fire protection, and many other essential services. Rural housing would also be in short supply.

If I get those first two wishes, then comes the idea that we have increased population. Population then will need jobs. I have a sense that more might be done, and I would encourage the USDA to commit maximum resources to rural development and to review as well the focus in this area.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address you today.

SEC. JOHANNIS: Thank you.

MR. HODGES: Hello. My name is Jeff Hodges. I am regional director for Quail Unlimited. I represent six States within the center part of the country here. Also, I am a landowner, and involved in CRP and WHIP. I live in Clinton, Missouri, which is about 11 miles west of Tightwad.

I will be addressing question number four in regards to conservation and environmental goals. One of the important things that our organization would like to see would be continuation of the conservation programs at their current levels of funding. We would not want to see any type of reduction in the CRP, in particular. And I think how we can be efficient with that is through the use of the environmental benefits index that focuses on the most important factors. It gives us the best value for the dollar spent on those conservation acres. So we strongly support the EBI system of ranking those. And use EBI to separate out individual participants rather than using something such as lowering the CRP cap.

The other thing that we support is the Conservation Security Program. That is one of the only programs, if not the only program, that we are aware of that works on a positive reward basis, rather than paying somebody for something that they have done wrong and to correct the problem. CSP actually pays them for something they have been doing right, and we support that.

We would also like to see the continuation of technical assistance. We feel like that is an important part. That does support private industry.

And finally, just wrapping up, at the beginning with the President's comments, he mentioned a number of goals that the Farm Bill should address. And we feel like that the conservation title of the Farm Bill addresses many of those. It does provide a future for the young farmers in a variety of different ways.

And directly, it is a cooperative conservation. And I feel that he was making a specific comment towards the conservation title of the Farm Bill when he said that. It is a responsible use of the taxpayer dollars, and there is no doubt that high-quality conservation is quality of life on the farm.

Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Yes, sir.

MR. SNELLY: Good afternoon. My name is Wayne Snelly, and I am from Lockwood, Missouri, which is Dade County, which is the west part of Missouri.

One of my things that I would probably like to see, being a senior citizen, is doing away with the death tax. I know that probably does not fall necessarily in your area. I am a sixth-generation farmer in our family, and I would like to see a seventh generation and maybe thereon.

The next thing that I would like to see -- I have got these kind of condensed from my original reading here -- is common sense environmental controls on crop and livestock. Sometimes we get carried away with things that will not work to produce cattle and so forth.

Better bargaining in trade of our products with competitive countries. I think when Japan decided not to buy our cattle I would have reminded them they had a Toyota with some bad tail lights and somebody ran into it and got hurt. What difference would it make? I think there should have been better bargaining at that time, and we would have had that opened.

I do not like the fuel companies making their largest profits in history at the expense of not only the farmer but the consumers. I think we should use Brazil as a guideline on our use of ethanol. They mandate 25 percent ethanol in their fuel.

We also have an implement business. In 1976, we had a ethanol plant on a trailer so that each farmer could produce his own ethanol and use the byproduct. They would not let us do it. And at that point in time, Brazil was using Ford Escort cars using ethanol. I would like to see more ethanol, more biodiesel.

And it really disturbs me about the surcharges. We have an implement business, and every time you turn around you have a surcharge. You have a surcharge on fuels. You have a surcharge on freight and a surcharge on steel. And it has a domino affect on everything.

Thank you for being here.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Wayne.

Over here.

MR. RILEY: I would like to welcome you to the Show Me State today. Being from the southeast corner of the State and being over here, I am away from home also.

I am Larry Riley. My hometown is Bernie, Missouri. I have got 44 years experience being a professional gambler, because I farm. And farming is a gamble any way you want to look at it. You wake up in the morning and you wonder, hey, am I going to be in business next week, next month, next year? Is my son going to be able to carry on the farming operation?

These are some things that affects every farmer. And our country has had a policy of cheap food. And if we want cheap food, then we have to be able to produce it cheaper. We have to have some subsidies that will help us produce it cheaper. And we have to have open markets throughout the world.

We have lost Iran and Iraq. By the way, I do represent Missouri Rice. But we have lost Iran, Iraq and Cuba. And after 40 years, Missouri sent some of the first rice to Cuba that had been there in 40 years. It is time to bury the hatchet and get on down with the show. We cannot carry a grudge all of our lifetime and make any progress.

Missouri, in the 1980's, we produced 60,000 acres of rice. Last year we were number six in the United States, producing something over 200,000 acres. This year we are number five. We have surpassed Texas. So Missouri is a rice State, and it is very viable in Southeast Missouri. There are nine counties that produce some rice.

In the Farm Bill, we would like to see at least what we had in 2002. Move it on up and do the same thing with it. If you are going to have make cuts with it, make it across the board, even to everyone. No one segment needs to take the brunt of it.

With that, I thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Over here.

MS. SEBOL: Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary. My name is Gretchen Sebol, and I am from the small town of Shelbyville, in Northeast Missouri. I am currently a senior at the University of Missouri, Columbia, in the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.

Today I would like to address the importance of a public land grant university education for agriculture. The education that I have received at MU I believe to be of the highest quality. In choosing an institution for higher education, I had many options, but ultimately decided that the best education would be in Missouri's public land grant university. Not only does MU provide me and thousands of other an affordable education but an education that is at the forefront of innovative research.

Academic research at MU is important not just to the faculty but for us as students as well. Students in our university receive their education not only in classrooms and laboratories but also in the fields at university farms and research centers. We see and learn firsthand how the research being conducted by our professors is making a difference in our respective fields, whether that be plant genomics, animal reproduction or forestry. Our public universities are stepping forward with promising results for those in agriculture and beyond.

It is important for us to continue to support our land grant universities so students like myself can continue to receive a quality education, so that we can contribute to the economic development of the agriculture industry.

Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Yes, sir.

MR. PHELPS: I am Paul Phelps. I am from Higginsville, Missouri, and I work at Strategic Marketing and Risk Management. We do marketing for farmers in our area.

One thing that we at Strategic Management would like to put forth is that as the administration is faced with budget cuts and WTO negotiations, it might be helpful if we can have improvements to the revenue insurance programs, to help cover some of these types of things. It may get us under the radar of WTO and do the same things that our farm program payments have done for us in the past. That is all.

Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Yes, sir.

SPEAKER: Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary. I am citizen of Marshfield, Webster County, Missouri. I am not a producer, but I work for and with 180 dairy cooperative members who are members of the Dairy Farmers of America. I am a member of Webster Electric Cooperative and I buy fuel from MFA Oil, Incorporated, a cooperative. And I am a member of Webster County Farm Bureau.

As I stated, I am a field rep for Dairy Farmers of America, but I am also privileged to serve as vice president of the Missouri Institute of Cooperatives. And on behalf of MIC and all

of our cooperative members, I thank you for coming to Missouri and also for the support that USDA has given to the cooperatives in the past, and would urge continued support in the future.

The cooperative way of business is guaranteed that right through the Capper-Volstead Act of 1922, which gives those producers the right to market products, buy input products, and, for most of us here, through the Rural Electric Administration, to be a member of a cooperative and turn the lights on each morning. So we are grateful for that.

One thing that we could be concerned about is losing that antitrust law. As the processors get bigger and our customers get bigger, so must the cooperatives. So we find it necessary to get bigger. But we want to urge you, through USDA, to continue to support the cooperative way of life and the cooperative way of business.

Again, on behalf of the Missouri Institute of Cooperatives, we thank you for coming and listening to us.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Yes, sir.

MR. DAVIS: Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary. I am Wesley Davis, from Ava, Missouri. That is just southeast of here about an hour. I come here representing the Ava FFA Chapter and the area FFA association. I would just like to reiterate what Stephanie Matthews the State FFA Officer said earlier.

I am a fourth-generation farmer in Douglas County. And there is no way to describe how frustrating it is to see something that my forefathers worked so hard for might get taken away because I cannot pay for it. The government must provide help to help young farmers entering the business of agriculture. Without farms, this country is desolate. We feed the world. We feed 65 percent of the world, and there are less than 2 percent of producers in the United States.

Farming is a dying art. And if help does not come soon, there will be a lot of hungry people out there, wondering what happened to the farmer. And I am about tired of everybody taking us for granted.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MODERATOR: Thank you.

MS. DILSAVER: Hi. My name is Frances Dilsaver, and I am speaking as a representative and a tree farmer from Christian County. I do not know how many people in this room even realize that the Forest Service is part of USDA, and I appreciate your help on that.

But as a tree farmer, I am a producer of an agricultural crop that we all use every day. We are all using it right now as we take notes on our paper. So it is an agricultural crop that I think often gets treated like the redheaded stepchild, but trees and forests are an agricultural crop.

Specifically for the Farm Bill, I would like to applaud the fact that we do at least have --

END OF SIDE A, TAPE TWO.

MS. DILSAVER: -- most of the Farm Bill is kind of geared towards cows and plows. And FLEP is about the only program we have left for those of us who are primarily long-term producers of a wood product. And so I would like to encourage keeping FLEP and its funding within the Farm Bill.

Thanks.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Yes, sir.

MR. STOKELY: Mr. Secretary, my name is David Stokely, and I did not come here today intending to speak so I did not have any prepared comments. I want to commend you on your ability to at least act like you are still paying attention after all of this. It must be pretty awful, but you have my compliments on your stamina.

(Laughter.)

MR. STOKELY: I am a landowner in Christian County, Missouri. And the reason I got up to speak was on a subject that I had not heard. We have heard lots of good comments today, but one comment I would like to throw in is on farmland preservation. In this part of the world, Southwest Missouri and Northwest Arkansas particularly, we are being tidal waved with the pressure of urbanization. We have problems that other parts of the world would kill to have. But it is a real serious problem for us, the fact that we will have no farmland left in Southwest Missouri or Northwest Arkansas due to urbanizing pressures.

So I just wanted to speak in favor of the portion of the Farm Bill that deals with farmland preservation.

Thank you.

MR. REED: Mr. Secretary, good to have you here. I am Bill Reed with Riceland Foods, Incorporated. We are a farmer-owned cooperative. And as you have already heard, we have over 200,000 acres of rice in the bootheel of Missouri. Riceland Foods, again, is a farmer-owned cooperative, which markets more than half of the Missouri rice crop. We have about 848 farmer members of the cooperative in Missouri, at least at our last count.

You know, often related to Farm Bill issues, we have reports coming out of Washington from various groups, and we had one this week. The top three recipients of farm payments were Riceland Foods as well as Farmers Rice Cooperative out in California, and Producers Rice Mill in Arkansas. All three of those are farmer-owned cooperatives. I cannot speak for the others, but as far as Riceland goes, those payments are distributed to 9,000 farmer members.

I know you understand the issue related to one check versus 9,000, when we are distributing funds to farmers, but I just wanted to make that point that we would appreciate any support from the Department to explain that cooperatives are more than one farmer. In our case,

9,000, and in Producer's Rice Mill case, about 2,500. That is a misconception that I think is hurting the rice industry in particular and agriculture in general as we study the new Farm Bill.

Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Yes, sir.

SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I am still an active rancher over at Cabool, Missouri, and I have been in farming all my life, which is a number of years now.

I would like to focus on point number one. It has not been brought up here today, and I think everything else pales in comparison. And that is the unintended consequences of farm policy. The primary unintended consequence, I think, has been the huge entities that are replacing the family farm. I think an unintended consequence has been the demise of the dairy, the beef, the poultry, and the pork industries in South Missouri and throughout the nation. And I think the unintended consequence has become that Southwest Missouri is now a milk deficit area. We used to have a surplus, and we shipped milk all over the United States.

Now, to correct these unintended consequences, I think we need to retain the 2002 Farm Bill and perfect upon it. And to perfect upon it, we need to include an equalizer, a qualifier, and a purifier. Now, by equalizer, I mean a much lower cap on payments. A \$250,000 cap for one farmer is ridiculous. When you have 10 percent of the huge farmers receiving 70 percent of the money, that is a scandal.

Now, as a qualifier, to retain the small family farmer, to have a John Tyson qualify as a family farmer, is ridiculous.

Now, as a purifier, I hear that in the 2007 Farm Bill we are thinking about inserting insurance companies. We do not need to Enronize the farm program. The USDA and its entities have done very well and they can handle this more efficiently than any insurance company out there.

That is my comments. Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: Thank you. And you can give more comments if you would like. You can go to www.usda.gov and you can also submit comments there. This is the last in the series of the Secretary's Farm Bill Forums. There will be other forums held until the middle of the month. We thank you all for your comments today.

With that, we are going to let Secretary Johanns give a few comments to close.

SEC. JOHANNIS: Well, your timing is perfect. Everybody paid attention to the two minutes. But as is turned out, I do get a few minutes to offer some thoughts. And so I will take that opportunity.

It is not often that I get the opportunity to indicate something that is an immediate, direct response to an issue that was raised. Somebody got up just in the last part of the Farm Bill Forum and said, Mr. Secretary, you need to tell your boss to put more money into ag education programs. Well, I will tell you, one of the ag education programs I like, because I participated in

both, were 4-H and FFA. And I saw the blue jackets here and the green. Well, I am pleased to tell you that last week the boss put into those programs \$2.5 million.

(Applause.)

SEC. JOHANNIS: I will tell the President he got a round of applause. Like I said, it is not often that I get to announce something so directly in response.

Let me tick down through some things that were mentioned here today, and it's a good opportunity for me to maybe bring you up to date on some things and maybe to offer some things for folks to ruminate on as you think about the next Farm Bill.

Up to date, in that column: Some of our individuals who are involved in cow-calf operations raised the issue of Japan. Let me tell you where we are at. It appears, finally, that the light is at the end of the tunnel with Japan. What do I mean by that? Just a few days ago, the Prion Subcommittee over there in the Food Safety Commission said U.S. beef is as safe as Japanese beef. Finally, we got that determination.

After that, the chairman of the Senate Ag Committee, a good man by the name of Saxby Chambliss from Georgia, said, gosh, we really appreciate that, but I still think this is going to take some months. The Ambassador from Japan was in his office almost immediately saying, no, no, it is not going to take that long. And at least predictions today are that they are going through a 30-day comment period here but, at the end of that, which would be about mid-December, we should see beef moving into Japan.

I hope that is the case. It sure seems like it. I have looked through their process. I have met with their ag minister on more occasions than I can remember. And it seems like that in fact is where we are headed.

I will also tell you, our discussions with Korea, which is a very good market for beef, are also going well. Taiwan opened its market for beef and then, after we identified that animal from Texas in July, they closed, but our discussions are going well with Taiwan. And then, finally, when I was in China recently, one of the things that we agreed upon is that they would send a team from China to the United States on beef issues in October. And I can tell you that that has occurred.

So we continue to move through this. We have restored, I think, about 65 percent of the market, or thereabouts. But the last piece of this market, really most of it, is Japan, Korea and I would put Taiwan in there. So if we get those three markets, we have really kind of restored our trade.

Now, things to ruminate on. Trade comes up all the time. It is awful easy to beat up on trade. I was Governor, as you know, from the State of Nebraska for six years. And during that six years, I did eight trade missions. I think I would have been roundly criticized by the ag community had I not done trade missions.

On every trade mission I did, I had the ag community with me. We would have cattlemen, pork producers, corn, soybeans, Farm Bureau, whatever. They participated very actively in the trade missions and, like I said, I think I would have been universally criticized had I not gone. That State was the fourth largest exporter of ag commodities in the United States, the fourth largest. A population of 1.7 million people built itself to a point where it was the fourth

largest exporter of ag commodities in the United States. But having said that, you are a major exporter also, because you are producing commodities that just go into the export market.

Now, here some things to think about. Twenty-seven percent of the receipts in agriculture come from the export market today. Now, you would not want me to show up here and say, I have got some great ideas for agriculture; I am going to adopt policies that jeopardize 27 percent of your receipts. I mean, you would throw me out of your State. You would call the President and say, we believe this guy should be thrown out of our country. Twenty-seven percent of your receipts are already coming from trade.

Now, we study productivity. You folks, the American farmer and ranchers, are the most productive of any in the world at any time in world history. And I am very serious in saying that. Productivity of the American farmer and rancher grows about 2 percent a year. Year after year after year after year, you are just getting better at what you do.

Now, when I grew up on that dairy farm in Northern Iowa, if we had a corn crop of 100 or 125 bushel per acre, that was something to brag about. And I can remember my dad talking about that with the neighbors. That was a heck of a year. Well, better seeds, better fertilizer, better cropping practices, a whole bunch of things, and I will tell you today that if you raised that kind of corn crop in Northern Iowa today, that is a crop failure. It has doubled in that period of time. Doubled may be too strong, but it is unbelievable how much productivity has occurred just in that one commodity. But on average, it grows 2 percent a year.

Now, let's look at our population. Our population is growing about a percent a year. Our consumption is growing less than a percent a year. Now, chart that over a decade. You are growing productivity by about 2 percent a year. That is 20 percent growth over a decade. You are growing the population's consumption by less than a percent. So let's say it is 8 to 10 percent over that 10 years. You see the imbalance. So 27 percent today is coming from trade. Our productivity is growing by 2 percent. And our population's consumption is growing by less than that.

Now, let me add one last thing to ruminate about when it comes to trade. Ninety-five percent of the world's population does not live here with us. Only 5 percent of the world's population lives in the United States. Now, tell me where we are headed here. Anybody who argues that trade has gotten us a problem is failing to recognize the productivity of the American farmer and rancher and where we are at today. And I have to tell you, I think it is important.

Now, a very important point about trade is we need to be discerning about it. Not every trade agreement, in my judgment, over the history of our country has been where we should have been with agriculture. But some trade agreements are absolutely unbelievably good for agriculture. We had a huge debate about CAFTA. I will just tell you straight, that was the most one-sided trade agreement for agriculture in the favor of American farmers and ranchers that we have maybe ever done.

What do I mean by that? Twenty-five to 30 years ago, the President, the House, the Senate, looked at these South American countries and said, they are headed the wrong way, and they were. They were headed toward dictatorship, poor economies. It was a very serious issue for our part of the world. So they said, we have got to do something to build these economies and lay a foundation for free elections and democracy. So what did they do? They said, you can bring your ag commodities into our marketplace duty free. I will tell you, it worked. Those countries have stabilized. We see free elections. We see democracies. But after 20 to 25 years of that, it was time to level the playing field.

So what did CAFTA do? The Central America Free Trade Agreement said, folks, look, after 25 years, we have got to bring the duties down on our products going into your marketplace. And that is what CAFTA did. It brought the duties down. And, quite honestly, for agriculture, it was hard to find anything that was wrong with CAFTA.

Now, we had some sugar issues. But we told sugar, look, this is not enough sugar to make any difference. And guess what? It has not been. Even without the hurricanes, we literally had a very tight sugar market here. And CAFTA only involved about a teaspoon of sugar per week per consumer in the United States. It just was not going to make any difference.

Now, let me, if I might, just talk to you about the Farm Bill. Yesterday, I was in Washington State, which has very diverse agriculture, much like you have here. In fact, we had everything from fruit people who got up and talked about the fruit they raised, to soft white wheat out in that part of the world.

Yesterday, the farmers in Washington State said, Mike, we are here to tell you what we would like to see in the 2007 Farm Bill. But, quite honestly, the 2002 Farm Bill and the way the loan rates have been set has been so tough on us out here we are not sure it is going to make any difference. We are not sure we are going to be able to hold on until this next Farm Bill is passed.

Now, we have been to other parts of the country where it is fruits and vegetables and they say they do not want to be a program payment crop. They want a Farm Bill that addresses their need for research in sanitary/phytosanitary enforcement, and promotion of market access.

Now, why are we hearing this disparity about farm policy around the country? We have had farmers, like this last gentleman that got up, and said, we need payment limits. We have got to get payment limits passed. I have had farmer after farmer step up and say, we have to pass payment limits. In other parts of the country, in more Southern States, they say that would be the worst thing you could do to us is pass payment limits.

Here is something to ruminate on in the rumination column. Sixty-six percent of America's farmers receive no subsidy whatsoever from the Farm Bill, 66 percent. Ninety-two percent of farm payments go to five crops. We are very familiar with those crops. We grew them in abundance in the State I came from, both Iowa and Nebraska -- Iowa where I grew up and Nebraska where I was Governor. Ninety-two percent of the farm payments go to five crops: corn, soybeans, rice, cotton, and wheat -- 92 percent. And then you can slice it and dice it in 10 dozen different ways as to where they go and who they go to, and I will not even go into that.

But that is why you are hearing the diversity about this area of the Farm Bill. Because, quite honestly, in our nation, agriculture is very, very, very diverse.

Now, if I were to summarize -- and boy, it is a risky proposition to summarize 22 sessions, and we are doing them in every State. There will be a day where we will put out some specific proposals and ideas, but we are months away. But I will offer some general thoughts.

The thing I would tell you is that good farm policy is not just a Farm Bill. It is a very important part of good farm policy. But number one, it is good tax policy. I understand the debate about tax cuts, but I will tell you what. Four billion dollars stayed in your pockets because we were able to get those tax reductions put in place. Four billion dollars stayed in communities across America because, what do farmers do? They invest in their communities, whether it is a new combine or a new tractor or whatever it is. That is significant.

One gentleman said, I want to pass this farm on. I would like to see elimination of the death tax. We have always stood for that. And you know what? It makes sense to us that if you are going to be taxed throughout your life in the acquisition of your wealth, we should not take one last shot as we are putting you in the ground. And so we advocate for the elimination of the death tax.

Renewable fuels is becoming a more and more important part. Twenty-five years ago, when I was a young lawyer in Lincoln, Nebraska, I had a farm client come to me and he said, I am thinking about investing in something and I would like you to do some research on it. I said, what is it? He said, it is a product that is called ethanol. I said, well, what is it? He said, well, you can mix it with gasoline. I said, well, where do you get it from? He said, corn. I did not have any idea what he was talking about. But now I know what he is talking about because, you know what? Twelve percent of our corn crop is processed into ethanol.

Now, when Senator Talent talked about the issue of expanding the renewable fuel standards, here is what the House and Senate did with his help and the help of others. They expanded the renewable fuel standard to 7.5 billion gallons. So in the next few years, we are going to increase almost double our usage of renewable fuels, ethanol, biodiesel, biomass. Believe me, this is something worth paying attention to in farm country. I would much rather address our fuel needs in the plains of Missouri and Iowa and Nebraska, et cetera, than in the oil fields of the Mideast. Wouldn't you? You bet.

(Applause.)

SEC. JOHANNIS: And the other thing I would tell you is that good farm policy really is good trade policy, and it is good economic development policy. Not every young person that grows up in a rural area will be a farmer or rancher, but I would love to offer the opportunity for young people to stay in the community that they are familiar with, where they went to school, where they want to raise their kids. And you see, economic development is now very much an important part of the Farm Bill.

Twenty-two Listening Sessions later -- we kicked this off in Nashville, Tennessee many, many months ago -- I have to tell you, this has been an unbelievable opportunity for me as your Secretary of Agriculture.

We have taken all of this information. And now, over the next few months, we are going to sit down with this testimony and we are going to start seeing if we can shape together ideas about farm policy, and how we address not only the questions that we put to you but the questions that have been raised by many people like you as we have traveled this nation. It has been a very, very worthwhile experience.

It somehow seems appropriate that I personally would end my part of this in the State of Missouri. Because I will share with you another little known fact. I started a piece of my career right here in Missouri, at Northwest Missouri State. It is not often reported, but I had a brother that actually graduated from Northwest Missouri State. He got his bachelor's there. He got his master's there.

He came home excited about Northwest Missouri State. I was going to a small Catholic school in Southeast Minnesota. But he said, Mike, you should come down for a couple of summers and pick up some hours. And so I did. When I was like 18 or 19 years old, I was here

in your State, and enjoyed every minute of it, every minute of it. And I might add, I did pretty good in my studies. So I thank you for that. You have got great education here.

Thank you for your hospitality. What a great Farm Bill Forum. God bless you all.

(Applause.)

(End.)