

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

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

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

DATE: February 14, 2003

SUBJECT: Oversight Plan for the House Committee on
Agriculture for the 108th Congress

Pursuant to Rule X, clause 2(d)(1) of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 108th Congress, I submit the following plan to fulfill the General Oversight Responsibilities reporting requirements. This outline was prepared in consultation with the Ranking Member, was presented to the full Committee for its consideration, and is now offered for your consideration relative to your responsibilities under the Rules. If you have any questions regarding this outline, do not hesitate to contact me.

OVERSIGHT PLAN
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
108TH CONGRESS

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

2002 FARM BILL AND CURRENT AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIC CONDITIONS:

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) implementation of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002;
- Current status U.S farm economy;
- USDA's implementation of the 2003 Crop Loan Rates, Nonrecourse Marketing Assistance Loans and Loan Deficiency Payments;
- Implementation of the Milk Income Loss Contract program authorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002;
- Review Federal Milk Marketing Order minimum pricing regulations; Operation of specialty crop programs;
- Impact of 2002 and 2003 calendar year weather conditions on 2003 crop production.
- Oversight of implementation of new peanut program, including marketing loan program, direct payments, counter-cyclical payments, and quota compensation payments;
- Oversight of implementation of sugar program, including flexible marketing allotments and Payment in Kind Program; and
- Proposed policy options for a new tobacco program and a buyout of tobacco quota.

FEDERAL CROP INSURANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT:

- Administration of the Federal Crop Insurance Program, including implementation of crop insurance provisions contained in ARPA of 2000 in light of 2001 and 2002 crop and livestock disasters and continued drought conditions into the 2003 crop year;
- Oversight of RMA and FCIC actions following the demise of American Growers Insurance Company, including analysis of the possible causes of the firm's failure and future problems for the crop insurance industry and its reinsurers and with respect to development of risk management products for livestock producers;
- USDA implementation of statutory provisions designed to reduce crop insurance program waste and improve program integrity;
- Proposed policy options regarding crop insurance options for revenue and gross income protection;
- Implementation of dairy forward contracting pilot project and expansion of the dairy options pilot program; and
- Impact of the Enron fraud and electricity market investigations by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the CFTC.

AGRICULTURAL TRADE:

- The Administration is negotiating the World Trade Organization (WTO) multilateral trade agreement affecting U.S. agriculture. Negotiations continue on the Agricultural Agreement under the Doha Development Agenda. New oversight of possible accession of new countries to the WTO, such as Russia;
- The Administration's plans for new trade agreements with Chile and Singapore, the Free Trade Area of the Americas and bilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with Morocco, Central America, the South African Customs Union and Australia;
- USDA's implementation of the Trade Title of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002;
- USDA and USTR's implementation of trade agreements and related issues to ensure compliance of other countries' trade obligations, including:
 - WTO dispute settlement provisions, European Union (EU) issues such as the EU meat hormone ban, use of the U.S. carousel legislation, tariff rate quotas (TRQ), withdrawal of EU TRQ's for grains, biotechnology, EU non-trade concerns, including animal welfare and other societal concerns and import and export state trading enterprises;
 - Issues relating to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), including Canada's use of high tariffs for dairy, poultry, eggs, barley, and margarine products and Canadian exports of wheat, barley, and other agricultural commodities into the U.S. Additionally, Mexico's recent actions designed to impair NAFTA trade by imposing antidumping cases on U.S. pork, apples, beef, and rice; sanitary and phytosanitary barriers on grains and meat, and a tax on soft drinks using high fructose corn syrup. Furthermore, issues relating to the implementation of the NAFTA agreement on sugar;

- Issues relating to China's accession to the WTO, including U.S. concerns with the implementation of tariff rate quotas, acceptance of U.S. biotechnology, and China's use of export subsidies;
- Issues relating to Russia's actions to revoke import licenses for meat and poultry;
- Harmonization of sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS), including those provided by international organizations and incorporation of new technologies and products into SPS standards;
- Food assistance programs to ensure that program goals are being met in the most recent uses of the program reauthorized in the 2002 Farm Bill, including the Global Food for Education Program, Food for Progress Program, and P.L. 480; and
- Congressional oversight of trade legislation that affects U.S. agriculture, including trade promotion negotiating authority and import sensitive products, sanctions legislation and examination of which markets offer the greatest opportunity to increase sales of U.S. agricultural products.

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND PROMOTION:

- Review implementation of biosecurity protocols at USDA ARS laboratories;
- USDA's implementation of research, education and extension programs authorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998, and the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000;
- Administration of the Agricultural Research Service's research stations and worksites;
- Administration of USDA's agricultural marketing and promotion programs;
- Review USDA's continuing ability to conduct foreign animal disease research, training and diagnostic programs at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center following the transfer of the center to the Department of Homeland Security;
- Federal efforts to facilitate research and development of aquacultural enterprises, specifically focusing on the activities of the Joint Committee on Aquaculture, chaired by the Secretary of Agriculture and including the Secretaries of Interior and Commerce; and
- Implementation of USDA's regulation on organic standards.

CONSERVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT:

- All changes to current and implementation of new conservation programs created in the 2002 Farm Bill;
- Comparing conservation payments to commodity program payments and their effect of keeping producers profitable;
- Impact of regulatory activities carried out pursuant to the Endangered Species Act, or any proposed legislative changes to such Act, on agricultural producers;
- Oversight of regulatory initiatives undertaken by the EPA, NMFS, and the FWS concerning Endangered Species Act consultations regarding pesticide products regulated under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act;
- Impact of EPA's regulatory activity relative to methyl bromide on production agriculture in the U.S.;

- Review of the resource needs of the EPA as they pertain to the collection of pesticide registration, re-registration and tolerance fees;
- Review of the continuing international negotiations concerning implementation of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants to the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, and the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade;
- EPA's implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA);
- Budget and program activities of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS);
- NRCS implementation of the FSRIA '02 amendments to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program;
- NRCS implementation of the technical service provider assistance provisions of FSRIA '02;
- Review of NRCS's Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking of the Conservation Security Program enacted in FSRIA '02;
- Review of USDA's Conservation Reserve and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program;
- Review of implementation of the EPA's rule on animal feeding operations and its impact on the U.S. livestock industry and the practical uses of the EQIP to ease implementation of the rule;
- Review of EPA's rule on permit trading under the Clean Water Act and its effect on and potential benefits to U.S. agriculture;
- Review implementation of the small watershed rehabilitation act;
- Review of potential impacts of EPA's Clean Air Act regulatory program on U.S. agriculture, including a review of the findings of the National Research Council's final report, Air Emissions from Animal Feeding Operations: Current Knowledge, Future Needs;
- Potential consequences for production agriculture in the U.S. should the mandates contained in the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change be implemented by treaty, law or regulation;
- Impact of regulatory activities carried out pursuant to the Endangered Species Act, or any proposed legislative changes to the ESA, on agricultural producers;
- Impact of EPA's regulatory activity relative to methyl bromide on production agriculture in the U.S.; and
- Impact of EPA's rule change on wetlands regulation under the Clean Water Act in recognition of the SWANK ruling.

U.S. FOREST SERVICE ADMINISTRATION:

- United States Forest Service (USFS) management of the National Forest System, including the agency's fiscal and financial accountability, strategic planning and performance measurement under the Government Performance and Results Act, efforts to address the nation's declining forest health, and federal laws and regulations affecting the management of private forest lands;
- USFS management of public lands under its jurisdiction, including a review of agency policy governing grazing and other uses of these lands which require users to secure a permit;

- Impacts of implementation delay in last-minute regulations affecting federal lands, including the forest roadless policy, transportation policy, and planning regulations;
- Impact of the Southern Forests Assessment, an interagency study on the sustainability of southern forest practices;
- Review of programs that strengthen and support private forestland management; and
- Review of the USFS/Bureau of Land Management report on co-location and combination of services and operations.

USDA GENERAL ADMINISTRATION:

- Implementation of the Freedom to E-File Act;
- Implementation and streamlining of USDA's Common Computing Environment;
- Administration of USDA operations, including reorganization efforts, administrative convergence, management improvements, compliance with the Government Performance and Results Act, oversight of the National Appeals Division, and the impact on client services;
- Implementation of USDA's Civil Rights settlement; and
- Confidentiality of information provided to USDA by agricultural producers.

FARM CREDIT, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AND THE RURAL ECONOMY:

- Farm Credit Administration's (FCA) regulatory program and activities regarding the Farm Credit System (FCS) to assure the FCS' safety and soundness;
- Availability of credit to agricultural producers in light of low commodity prices and weather disasters;
- Review of FCA's national charter proposal and its potential effects on the viability of the FCS;
- Review of Farmer Mac activities and programs;
- Implementation of rural development policies and authorities contained in FSRIA '02; and
- Implementation of the local television legislation enacted in FSRIA '02.

WELFARE REFORM AND FOOD NUTRITION PROGRAMS:

- Oversight of the implementation of provisions relating to the food stamp program included in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002. These include:
 - Food stamp benefits for non-citizens
 - Increasing the food stamp standard deduction
 - Increasing the transitional food stamp benefits for persons leaving welfare programs
 - Simplification of the food stamp program by states
 - Employment and training programs for food stamp participants;
- Reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), including waiver authority for the food stamp program and initiation of the state food assistance block grant demonstration project;

- Implementation and assessment of the state's use of electronic benefits transfer (EBT) systems to improve the distribution of food benefits;
 - Effectiveness of state welfare agencies and statutory provisions designed to curb food stamp trafficking and fraud;
 - Effectiveness of the reformed food stamp quality control system on reducing overpayments, payments to ineligible participants and underpayments;
 - Implementation and monitoring of the funding levels for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), both levels of funding for commodities and for administrative expenses;
 - Oversight of other commodity distribution programs and those programs included in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, including:
 - Commodity food projects
 - Commodity supplemental food program
 - Seniors' farmers market nutrition program
 - Commodities for the school lunch program
 - Grants for purchase of locally produced food
 - Fruit and vegetable pilot program
 - Nutrition information and awareness pilot program
- and
- Nutrition monitoring oversight.

FOOD SAFETY:

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

PLANT AND ANIMAL HEALTH:

- The issue of new drug development, approval, and availability for animal agriculture as well as the implementation of the Animal Drug Availability Act;
- Review implementation of the Plant Protection Act of 2000;
- Review implementation of the Animal Health Protection Act of 2002;

- Review enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act;
- Federal efforts to reduce threats to human, animal, and plant health due to predatory and invasive species; and
- USDA's management of domestic pest and disease surveillance and eradication programs.

LIVESTOCK MARKETING:

- USDA's implementation of mandatory livestock price reporting;
- USDA's implementation of voluntary Country of Origin Labeling in preparation for mandatory Country of Origin Labeling;
- Effectiveness of the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) in monitoring the potential for market manipulation in the livestock industry; and
- Concentration of agribusiness and the potential impact on agricultural producers;

HOMELAND SECURITY AND BIOTERRORISM:

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

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Adequacy of agricultural labor and the agricultural guest worker program, H2A.