

**STATEMENT OF SCOTT HUTCHINS, OF INDIANA TO BE UNDER SECRETARY
FOR RESEARCH, EDUCATION, & ECONOMICS,
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

Good morning. Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and members of the Committee, I am pleased to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to the position of Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics (REE) within the U.S. Department of Agriculture. I'd like to thank President Trump for this opportunity and Secretary Rollins for her confidence and support in this nomination. I am myself a product of the U.S. land-grant system and therefore feel a great sense of honor to be considered for this position and, if confirmed, I will dedicate myself to fulfilling the mission as outlined by Congress and achieve the goals of USDA as outlined by Secretary Rollins. I would also like to introduce and thank my wife, Janet Hutchins, from Alabama. We celebrate 45 years of marriage in June, and we have three wonderful adult children and seven grandchildren, all age 12 and under—no one could ask for a better lifelong partner and supportive family.

Throughout my career, I have dedicated my professional contributions toward developing innovations and novel technologies in support of agricultural production—working every day to provide tools that allow farmers to not only succeed in their businesses, but to do so while using fewer inputs. For example, I was the global product development manager for spinosad, an EPA Green Chemistry Award Winner and naturally derived insect management tool that is today one of the most widely used insect management tools in both organic agriculture and conventional agriculture within the U.S., and globally. Indeed, I have witnessed extraordinary progress and positive changes in agricultural production and sustainability over my career.

My professional journey as a scientist began at Auburn University as an undergraduate student in the late 1970's, where I benefitted from excellent teachers and mentors in agricultural entomology and became passionate about helping growers manage devastating pest problems. One formative experience, as a Cotton Scout in central Alabama in 1980, exposed me to the practical realities of pest management farmers faced daily. Devastating crop losses from the cotton boll weevil required extensive chemical control, which subsequently “released” several species of secondary pests (e.g., “worms”, thrips, whiteflies, and plant bugs) that required further chemical control. If you compare that reality of 1980 to cotton production systems of today, the

boll weevil has been largely eradicated due to the great work of USDA and land-grants, worm species are controlled via biotechnology-powered host plant resistance, and the remaining species are managed with tools safer than their predecessors. Similar progress has been made for many other commodities within the United States, and I am pleased and proud to have contributed in some measure to this progress. However, agricultural systems are living and evolving, so the need for innovation in every aspect of agricultural production and nutrition is never ending.

Impacted by this experience, I elected to pursue graduate studies at Mississippi State University, where I studied the impact of narrow-row soybean production on insect pest populations, beneficial species, and pest control options while learning the art of research. I became a student of integrated pest management (IPM) and followed this interest to Iowa State University to study under the tutelage of Dr. Larry Pedigo, who was a world-renowned pioneer in the field. Through his mentorship and an extraordinary graduate student team environment, I developed a passion for understanding how and when farmers should control pest problems and elected to also pursue a minor in agricultural economics to link farm management to IPM. I have carried these learnings and lessons from all three outstanding land-grants with me throughout many roles.

I also have been fortunate to have worked closely with numerous university teams and administrators throughout my career, along with scientific societies, to create and advance public-private partnerships. Notably, as a member of the Governing Board of the Entomological Society of America (ESA) for 9 years, including as ESA President in 2007, I have sought to build consensus on positive change while encouraging a culture of engagement for all members and member categories in planning the future role ESA will play for its members. I was deeply honored to have been elected as a Fellow of ESA in 2009, the first member with a long career in the private sector to receive that honor in the history of that society. I was also elected as an Honorary Member in 2019.

After a nearly 32-year career in the private sector, I was honored to serve as Deputy Under Secretary for REE from January 2019 to January 2021 under the leadership of Secretary Perdue. I learned firsthand about the expansive talent and commitment of our Federal Agencies in REE and, if confirmed, I look forward to continuing to support the critical mission of REE

under the leadership of Secretary Rollins to fulfill the expectations of Congress and the Trump Administration to ensure American agriculture remains the most effective and efficient producer of food and feed in the world. Because any model for sustained progress requires a focus on best practices and land stewardship, the land-grant mission is timeless in not only research, but also research made relevant through education and extension. This includes research on the healthy and productive use of the land, and on the animal and human consumers of these agricultural products. I was honored to have met the Nobel Laureate, Dr. Norman Borlaug, who inspired all of us to pursue earnest innovation in agriculture as the best way to ensure food security for all and enable the diversification of society into other industries and endeavors.

If confirmed, I commit to actively working with and leading the REE team to create strategic initiatives and national priorities for REE in line with the goals and objectives of President Trump, Secretary Rollins, and Congress. The women and men of the REE agencies are truly world class and have a tremendous history of impact. My goal is to ensure that their full potential is realized for the continued benefit of American agriculture with a renewed focus on tangible results and innovative discovery goals aligned with the needs of both producers and consumers. I have many years of applicable experience in administering large, complex, and diverse research organizations. I am also fortunate to have had unique professional experiences through two major mergers with roles in Human Resources, Six Sigma Quality Improvement, and numerous program and portfolio management assignments that, I believe, will prove useful to the administrative goals of USDA, if confirmed by the Senate.

Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, members of the Committee, I am truly honored to have been nominated for this critical USDA role and, if confirmed, I pledge to do all I can each and every day to expand the competitiveness of American agriculture and further develop the framework and capabilities of REE scientists and professionals in pursuit of agricultural innovation. In closing, I would like to thank you for allowing me the privilege of appearing in front of the Committee today. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.