

NOMINATION OF RICHARD FORDYCE TO BE
UNDER SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE FOR
FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

July 23, 2025

Printed for the use of the
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry



Available on <http://www.govinfo.gov/>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

61–257 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2025

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NOMINATION OF RICHARD FORDYCE TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE FOR FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION

WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 2025

U.S. SENATE
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:03 p.m., in Room 328A, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. John Boozman, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Boozman [presiding], Hoeven, Ernst, Hyde-Smith, Marshall, Tuberville, Justice, Grassley, Fischer, Klobuchar, Bennet, Smith, Fetterman, and Schiff.

Also present: Representative Sam Graves.

STATEMENT OF HON. BOOZMAN, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF ARKANSAS, CHAIRMAN, U.S. COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

Chairman BOOZMAN. Good afternoon. It is my privilege to call this hearing to order.

I thank my colleagues for joining us today. We will be considering the nomination of Mr. Richard Fordyce of Missouri to be Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation at USDA.

Mr. Fordyce, congratulations on your nomination, and thank you very much for your willingness to serve again. When reviewing your background, it is clear you have the experience to lead the mission area. You have experienced the challenges of operating a family farm. You have been a customer of and have led FSA offices yourself. You served as a public servant in state government and at USDA during President Trump's first term. These experiences will be critical for you to draw on as you make decisions that will have the bearing on family farms and rural communities that are so, so very important amid an extremely challenging farm economy.

Your nomination comes at a crucial time for American agriculture. The men and women at FPAC agencies work hand-in-hand with our farmers, ranchers, and rural communities to utilize the tools and resources necessary to mitigate depressed commodity prices, shifting markets, persistently high input costs, and intense natural disasters. In the face of mounting risk, American farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners persevere to continue their family legacy and feed and fuel and clothe their nation and the world.

I appreciate the ongoing work at USDA to implement the \$10 billion Emergency Commodity Assistance Program and the \$20 billion

Supplemental Disaster Assistance Program and the updates to farm safety net and risk management tools we recently included in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. This bill also provided needed investments in conservation programs, and we will rely on your leadership to ensure NRCS efficiently implements these programs for our producers.

We still have a lot of work to do. We need to modernize current farm loan limits, which have not kept pace with an increasingly capital-intensive industry. Approval times for farm loans vary greatly by state and county and can lead to unacceptable delays at critical times when producers are attempting to purchase land or get seed in the ground. FSA must have the personnel and the technology necessary to responsibly reduce the amount of time it takes for loans to be processed.

We also must lower existing hurdles for young and beginning farmers. Every day the next generation of farmers are working hard to buy land, expand their operations, and streamline the process of transitioning farm ownership and operation from one generation to the next. There needs to be an emphasis on maximizing the efficiency of FSA programs to better enable young farmers to capture this dream.

If confirmed as Under Secretary of the USDA mission area that oversees these critical producer-facing programs, the Committee will look to you to quickly implement improvements authorized by Congress and follow in congressional intent. I look forward to hearing from Mr. Fordyce on these issues. Again, congratulations on your nomination.

Now we will turn to our Ranking Member, Senator Klobuchar.

**STATEMENT OF HON. KLOBUCHAR, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Well, thank you very much, Chairman, and thank you to Mr. Fordyce for being with us, as well as his wife, Renee. I also see that Congressman Graves, of course, is here, as well as former USDA Trade Under Secretary Ted McKinney. We welcome all of your guests, Mr. Fordyce.

Mr. Fordyce, you have been nominated to lead a mission area that serves a critical customer-facing role for America's farmers and ranchers. Between your strong experience at the Department and your experience being a farmer customer of these agencies, you clearly understand the mission and responsibility to serve all of the Farm Production and Conservation mission area.

The FPAC agencies, what a name, the FPAC agencies are the Federal Government's front door for producers across the country. They administer programs that provide farmers with disaster recovery, the farm safety net, access to credit, and, of course, voluntary conservation programs. I was just with corn and soybean farmers last week from Senator Smith's and my state, who talked about the financial stress from the commodity prices, trade policy, high input costs. Unfortunately, this is showing up in the form of an uptick in farm loan mediations. In Minnesota alone, our extension service's Farmer-Lender Mediation Program had nearly 1,300 mediation notices this fiscal year by the end of June, more than 50 percent higher than at this point in recent years.

As I have made clear many times, I am concerned about some of the actions by this administration during these difficult economic conditions and that these conditions are exacerbated by understaffed or understaffed FSA offices, what we are seeing with grants and contracts, and then, of course, the tariffs. Nearly 2/3 of Regional Conservation Partnership Program contracts have been withdrawn without full explanation. This includes two projects in Minnesota, totaling \$34 million in assistance to the Board of Water and Soil Resources and a county conservation district for improving water quality and stabilizing soils.

Mr. Fordyce, you are an experienced leader with a track record of bipartisanship and a passion for the mission of serving farmers. As we discussed when we met a few months ago, I hope you will work with me and all Members of this Committee to bring needed benefits for producers in this challenging time.

Congress provided \$31 billion in economic and disaster assistance to provide much-needed assistance for losses in 2023 and 2024, while roughly half of this funding has made its way into the hands of farmers, those without crop insurance, or farmers with shallow losses are still waiting, and the structure of assistance is uncertain.

During your first stint at USDA, as the FSA administrator, as noted by the Chairman, you effectively reached out to a population of farmers that had never participated in FSA programs before in administering the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program. We need you to use the same creativity here so farmers who have not traditionally utilized USDA programs can access disaster assistance.

I look forward to hearing more about your vision for FPAC and how, if confirmed, you will work with this Committee in a bipartisan way to help farmers and ranchers across the country.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Thank you. We are really pleased to be joined by Representative Sam Graves from Missouri. I had the opportunity to serve with Sam for many years in the House, and he is a dear friend and somebody that is so well respected in the House and really just has his finger into lots of different things that he is a champion of.

You are recognized, and again, thank you for taking time. I know you guys are really busy.

Mr. GRAVES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.

I really appreciate the opportunity to be here today to not only introduce someone who is incredibly qualified for the position of Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm Production and Conservation, but he is also somebody that I can call a very close friend and fellow farmer from northwest Missouri.

Richard Fordyce, along with his wife Renee, they farmed in Harrison County, Missouri their entire lives. Raising corn and soybeans on the family farm, Richard understands intimately exactly what farmers see and feel every single day. Richard has not just been content to stay on the farm. As has been pointed out, he knows that good farm policy impacts our ability to put food on the table, and that is why he has been heavily involved in the Missouri Soybean Association, University of Missouri Extension, the United

Soybean Board, the Missouri Agriculture Leadership of Tomorrow program, and Missouri Farm Bureau.

Richard is probably most well-known, as you pointed out, from his time as a director of agriculture in Missouri and as the administrator of the Farm Service Agency during the first Trump Administration. As Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm Production and Conservation, Richard will oversee some critical agencies that impact farmers and ranchers every single day, and I cannot think of anyone more qualified for this position than Richard is.

It is not because of his leadership credentials or his positions in ag policy that Richard has held. It is because Richard, he will make an incredible Under Secretary of Ag because Richard is a farmer through and through and he knows the people that he is going to serve and the challenges that they face, and he knows every single policy or rule change can make or break a farmer or their operation.

That is why I am proud to introduce Richard Fordyce to be the next Under Secretary for Agriculture for Farm Production and Conservation. Again, I thank all of you for your time and your indulgence in letting me do the introduction.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Well, again, thank you so much for being here and taking the time. I know that Mr. Fordyce appreciates it very much, as do we.

Mr. GRAVES. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Again, thank you for being here, Mr. Fordyce. I will now administer the oath, and then you may begin with your testimony, where you will have five minutes.

Please stand and raise your right hand.

Do you swear or affirm that the statements you are about to provide is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. FORDYCE. I do.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Do you agree that, if confirmed, you will respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted Committee of the Senate?

Mr. FORDYCE. I will.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Thank you. You are now recognized for your statement.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD FORDYCE, OF MISSOURI, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE FOR FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION

Mr. FORDYCE. Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as the Under Secretary for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Production and Conservation mission area. I want to thank President Trump for nominating me to serve in this role, and I want to thank Secretary Rollins for her trust and confidence in supporting my nomination.

Since I was five years old, I knew I wanted to be a farmer. That early passion for agriculture has been the driving force throughout my life, shaping my decisions and inspiring my commitment to learning, growing, and giving back to the agricultural community.

Every step of my career in agriculture has been marked by a willingness to raise my hand, take on challenges, and contribute to the strength and resilience of our farming systems.

My farmer volunteer journey began on my local county Farm Bureau board and led to leading the young farmer programs in both Missouri and the American Farm Bureau. I have served the soybean checkoff for a total of over 25 years, both on the Missouri Soybean Merchandising Council and the United Soybean Board. My passion for soil conservation led to an appointment to the Missouri Soil and Water Districts Commission where I ultimately served as chair.

Some of this volunteer work caught the eye of Governor Jay Nixon, and he asked me to join his administration as director of the Missouri Department of Agriculture. Following the Nixon Administration, I was appointed as the Missouri State Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency, serving in that role for six months. I was then appointed as the administrator of the United States Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency.

This personal journey guides my vision for the Farm Production and Conservation mission area to deliver an effective, efficient, predictable, and transparent service to farmers across the Nation. At FPAC, we have a duty to serve as a steadfast ally to those who work tirelessly to feed, fuel, and clothe the world. This means not only providing consistent support for our producers but also modernizing the tools used for delivering these programs across the entire mission area by our amazing and dedicated staff.

Disaster payments are one such critical tool, and my commitment is to align them with the goals set forth by President Trump and Congress, making them more timely, fair, and impactful. Our farmers deserve nothing less than a system that supports recovery and resilience in the face of adversity.

Additionally, I believe in the incredible potential of private and public partnerships to drive innovation and success in agriculture. By fostering collaboration between government, private industry, and communities, we can unlock new opportunities and create solutions that benefit both producers and consumers alike.

Together with a shared commitment to the values of integrity, transparency, and service, we can ensure that FPAC continues to be a beacon of support and progress for America's farmers and ranchers. This covers all aspects of FPAC, including programs that support conservation of our vital natural resources, programs designed to respond to disasters, and tools to help manage risk and access to credit, all of which are so vitally important to the industry of agriculture. This vision is not just about today. It is about building a sustainable, thriving future for the next generation of agricultural leaders.

To the Members of the Committee, I appreciated the time to have met with many of you and your respective staff before today's hearing. The opportunity to learn about what is important to you and the people of your state was invaluable. My commitment would be to continue those conversations, so we are as well informed on all the various issues across these great United States.

I am truly humbled to be considered for this position. If confirmed, I commit to following Secretary Rollins' leadership and

using the experience gained through my years of varied agriculture leadership to support the Farm Service Agency, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the Risk Management Agency, all of which make up the FPAC mission area.

I have always raised my hand, dedicating my life to the service of improving our industry. I look forward to working with this Committee in the future and thank each and every one of you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Fordyce can be found on pages 26–27 in the appendix.]

Chairman BOOZMAN. Thank you. Before I ask my questions, I would like to add letters of support from various farm groups for Mr. Fordyce's nomination in the record. Without objection, so ordered.

[The letters can be found on pages 30–38 in the appendix.]

Chairman BOOZMAN. Mr. Fordyce, you have had extensive engagement with the Farm Service Agency. How do you plan to best utilize the FSA county office employees while also improving technology and communication between FSA and the RMA to provide exceptional service to producers across the country? I know we were out and about, have been out and about a lot for the last couple years in regard to trying to get together a farm bill, trying to help our farmers, but in talking to the FSA people, it is not unusual for them to talk about having to get into multiple different entities in order to get the information they need in order to do things in a timely fashion.

Mr. FORDYCE. Senator, thank you for that question. You know, I, too, have had those very same conversations. When I was the administrator in the first administration, you know, we implemented a lot of programs, most notably the 2018 Farm Bill.

With those implementations, it lots of times creates the necessity to create software that supports that implementation. I think I can safely say, and I think others would probably agree, probably some in the room, that a lot of our technologies are woefully old and antiquated, I would almost say, in some cases, and so certainly, there is a need for some modernization in the tools that are used by FSA to deliver those programs. Also, we probably could see some modernization in the ways that we participate with the producers that we serve at FSA.

Chairman BOOZMAN. The other thing that we hear a lot about is just the time that it takes in dealing with the loan process. We hear that from applicants and lenders across the board. I think it has gotten a little bit better, but it is still a problem.

Again, I know that is something that you are well aware of, and hopefully, we will be able to have you back in several months and you tell us a good story as to how we are moving in the right direction in that regard. Many of these things are just inefficiencies that cost some money, but the efficiency will gain us so much, and it is just a matter of us helping you to get those things done.

You have got a wealth of experience both on the farm and in leadership at USDA. How can existing federal programs be expanded or modified to better support young and beginning farmers and ranchers?

Mr. FORDYCE. Well, again, Senator, a good question, and I appreciate that question. You know, I think that all of us probably in this room certainly have an eye to the next generation and that population that is new or beginning farmers, and, you know, we are all probably pretty aware of the capital requirements and things that it does take to start a farm. They can be enormous.

You know, I think that in some cases, I think, depending on where you are located geographically, what your history has been as a new farmer or beginning farmer, you know, I think we could probably do a better job of outreach and communication, making those new and beginning farmers more aware of what is available that can be of assistance and can be of help to starting a new farm, you know, not only from a program standpoint, a financial standpoint, but also even as a mentorship standpoint, and I think we could look to do that.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Very good. As you know, the farm bill is the single largest source of federal funding for private lands conservation implemented by NRCS and FSA. The voluntary incentive-based conservation programs are a key part of the safety net used by farmers and ranchers to maximize on-farm efficiencies and opportunities along with productivity.

If confirmed, how do you plan to promote and enhance voluntary and incentive-based conservation programs like EQIP and the Wetland Reserve Program?

Mr. FORDYCE. Yes, and thanks again for that question, Senator. I think a lot of it is, again, it is talking about that outreach, but I think it is that peer-to-peer outreach. You know, we have got a lot of producers across this country that have good experiences with EQIP or the Wetland Reserve Program, and they sometimes can be our best advocates and, you know, look to find ways to include more folks to be able to share that story.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Very good. Senator Klobuchar.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Thank you very much, Senator Boozman. I am going to have to leave after my questions to see one of our colleagues' first Floor speeches, but thank you again, Mr. Fordyce.

FPAC is the most customer-facing mission area, as I noted in my opening, and I ask that you be responsive to both Republican and Democratic sides of this Committee. I have every reason to believe you will be based on your past work. Will you commit to providing answers to oversight questions throughout the implementation of the bill that was just passed, the budget bill, and other areas?

Mr. FORDYCE. Yes, Ranking Member. Thank you for that question, and yes, the answer is absolutely yes. I think when I was here in the first Trump Administration as administrator, I came to the Hill and visited with folks on both sides of the aisle, answered questions, solicited input, and would certainly commit to doing that this time if confirmed.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. You also have a good recommendation from Senator Blunt, which means a lot to many of us.

CRP is a critical tool for improving wildlife habitat, water quality, soil health. Leader Thune and I have long partnered to improve CRP. Will you commit to working with me and others on improvements to CRP, including improvements the USDA currently has the authority to make?

Mr. FORDYCE. Yes, absolutely, and I would say that, you know, CRP now is, what is it, 30 years old, 40 years old, and, you know, I think that is truly a success story and the evolution of CRP, the different practices that have come about. Yes, Ranking Member, I definitely would commit to working with you as we improve CRP.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Okay. When confirmed, you are going to go walk into a lot. FPAC has lost nearly 4,100 employees in the Deferred Resignation Program. FSA alone has lost over 1,000 employees, and there are offices who are understaffed or unstaffed. This is particularly troubling as Congress has tasked USDA with implementing economic and disaster relief this year. The recently enacted reconciliation bill will require FSA to sign up 30 million new base acres over the next year. As a former administrator of FSA, do you think having offices open, available, and fully staffed is important? How do you believe FPAC can meet its mission of serving farmers with these kinds of reductions of 4,100 employees?

Mr. FORDYCE. Well, thank you for the question, Ranking Member. You know, I have not had an opportunity, and—but will once confirmed, to dig into the data, understand where those folks—where those retirements came from, where they are located, and certainly, you know, I cannot say enough about the folks that work—and it is across all three agencies within the mission area, but I am most familiar with the Farm Service Agency, and they are, again, some of the greatest folks that you will ever meet and ever work with.

Again, understanding what that is, looking at the data, but I am confident, Senator, that we can deliver our mission-critical responsibilities in a very positive way.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Very good. Last question. I look forward to building on the work that was begun in the 2018 Farm Bill to improve USDA efficiency and provide farmers with a better understanding of the potential economic farming benefits, not only of the commodities programs and the like, but also conservation practices. Advances in data paired with widespread adoption of precision ag technology present exciting opportunities to empower farmers with the best tools available. Senator Thune and I, again, have an Agriculture Innovation Act, and then Senator Fischer and I have partnered on another bill. How do you think the USDA can partner with academic institutions and other researchers to better inform the conservation practices? What barriers does USDA face in using data and working more closely on conservation?

Mr. FORDYCE. Well, I do appreciate that question a great deal because that is an area that I am very interested in, very passionate about. I think that there is an opportunity for USDA and the FPAC mission area, and more specifically, to—and maybe it is understand the technologies better and how can those work to create better opportunities for the farmers and ranchers that we serve. I would just say that that is—there is a lot there, and, you know, we would be—I would commit that we will do what we can to learn more about it, understand it, and see what kind of a partnership could exist.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Very good, thank you.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Senator Hyde-Smith.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, very much, and for the Ranking Member for holding this hearing today. Mr. Fordyce, thank you for being here, and I see another friend in the back there as well, lots of friends, good to see you.

I have been so concerned over the farm economy, and as you know, they have struggled for the past few years in a serious situation. Farmers continue to deal with the high input costs, low commodity prices, the natural disasters, and the interest rates that have been so inflated, along with the labor shortages and the issues we have had there, and the regulations.

Last December, Congress passed the American Relief Act, which provided \$10 billion to support producers. This assistance, known as the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program, the ECAP, was passed. The Trump Administration, with clear direction from Congress, delivered it in a record time, very proud of that and the way that they handled that. On top of that, Congress recently passed the One Big Beautiful Bill, which included critical improvements to farm programs that Republicans have been strongly advocating for, including the reference price increases that were so needed and the crop insurance improvements and the disaster program assistance programs.

These legislative achievements handed a lifeline to the American farmers and ranchers. Again, I would like to reiterate my appreciation to Chairman Boozman and his staff and the many Members in this room, and the Appropriations Chair, Susan Collins, as well, played a role in that. She took a last-minute flight from Europe to get back to D.C. to help with that supplemental effort for securing these victories.

Bottom line is this, American agriculture is not out of the weeds yet. As we well know, so many of these things still exist, and we know what the struggles are, despite our best efforts. The times are still tough, and farmers are going to have to survive some unfavorable conditions, as much as the farm safety net improved, kicked in. With the current situation we are experiencing in the farm economy, we have to have an all-hands-on-deck approach to support that as we head into harvest season.

Mr. Fordyce, if confirmed, and America's farmers find themselves in a situation where emergency support is necessary to keep them afloat again, how willing are you to explore any and all authorities under USDA's jurisdiction to help them?

Mr. FORDYCE. Well, Senator—and it is good to see you again today. Thank you for the question, and you are exactly right. It is tough in farm country right now, and you laid out all the reasons why that is. I would say that, you know, certainly, you know, I would be supportive of looking at what authorities we might have at USDA, but certainly would, you know, love to partner with Congress, and understanding how both USDA, more specifically the FPAC mission area, you know, could work together to find some solutions going forward. You are exactly right. It is going to be a tough go for a little while longer, I am afraid.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Are you confident that there are existing authorities now that can be used if this situation gets increasingly dire? For instance, I understand per an old USDA factsheet that the Department provided timely targeted assistance to farmers

through its long-standing Section 32 authority 18 times between 1999 and 2009. I am not suggesting that we go there just yet, but just pointing out examples outside of the Commodity Credit Corporation Section 5 authority. Are you comfortable with these?

Mr. FORDYCE. Senator, I will have to admit, I am not familiar with Section 32 that you reference but certainly would be more than happy to look into that and see if that would be a possible option.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Well, thank you very much, and my time is up, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Thank you. Senator Tuberville.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Fordyce, for being here. I grew up close to a town called Fordyce in Arkansas, home of a famous football coach years ago, Mr. Bear Bryant. Thanks for wanting to do this again in another fashion. Thanks for your service because it is awfully hard, and you go through a lot.

First of all, I want to know if you will help me support these bills. I just put two new ag bills on the Floor today. It was today, wasn't it?

[Laughter.]

Senator TUBERVILLE. The first addresses the Federal Crop Insurance Board of Directors. There are four seats for producers, and we want one of those seats to be for a producer of both livestock and crops to provide a different perspective for various new livestock/crop insurance products RMA is implementing. That is my first one. Does that sound pretty good?

Mr. FORDYCE. Yes, Senator, it actually does. It sounds like it makes some sense and would—

Senator TUBERVILLE. Now, we are from Alabama. Now, we can make some sense now, okay?

[Laughter.]

Mr. FORDYCE. Yes, sir.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Go ahead.

Mr. FORDYCE. No, I think that is—I think I am—I think I have answered that.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Would you vote for that?

Mr. FORDYCE. Would I vote for that?

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes.

Mr. FORDYCE. I think—I mean, I am not backpedaling, Senator, but I think what I would need to do is understand exactly what the makeup is of the Federal Crop Insurance Board, and—but it sounds like a good idea to me.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Thank you. The second bill would authorize a study for double and rotational cropping of winter canola in the Mid-South region. This would gather data as farmers in north Alabama and Tennessee are starting to grow winter canola for synthetic aviation fuel and diesel fuel. All these bills get complex, I know.

Mr. FORDYCE. I am sure that is complex, but I am aware of the winter canola effort. I would say that I would applaud the RMA for being responsive and having the ability, you know, to evolve as things change. I would think that that—that they would take a look at what kind of options might be available.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. As we all know, our farmers are in bad trouble. I have a lot of friends that are huge farmers, and they do not know whether they are going to make it through the year, much less through this crop. You know, right now, farmers are the largest group with the most suicides in the country right now. It is that bad. It is really, really serious.

Access to credit is becoming harder and harder. This year was really tough. We had to come up with some subsidies for some of the farmers to get them through this past winter to get another crop. Poultry producers are facing huge challenges, steep costs of poultry houses, \$3.5 million for four houses. Can you discuss the importance of increasing our guaranteed loan limits to \$3.5 million because of that?

Mr. FORDYCE. Yes, well, I was actually—I was serving as the administrator of the Farm Service Agency the last time the loan limits were raised, and I think it was welcomed, certainly, by the agency, and it was welcomed by the producers that the farm loan programs serve. You know, if that were the intent of Congress to raise those loan limits, I think that, you know, would be appropriate given the cost of things and the entry-level costs of things.

Senator TUBERVILLE. It is going sky-high. It is not getting any cheaper. One quick question. Feral swine, we have got huge problems in our state and I know other states. In the Big Beautiful Bill, we had \$105 million for the Feral Swine Eradication Program. What is your stance on the eradication program? Do you think we are making progress?

Mr. FORDYCE. That would be tough for me to say. We do have those in Missouri as well.

Senator TUBERVILLE. You all have hogs?

Mr. FORDYCE. We have—yes, we have—

Senator TUBERVILLE. Oh, you do?

Mr. FORDYCE [continuing]. feral swine. Yes, we have wild hogs in Missouri. Go ahead, sir.

Senator TUBERVILLE. No, go ahead. I am listening.

Mr. FORDYCE. Well, in Missouri, they have stopped the ability for folks to hunt them because the idea was that if they are hunting them, then there has to continue to be a supply of them, and somehow they just keep showing up. I do not know. I guess it maybe is one way of looking at it.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Well, just let them know that us in Alabama will send you some if you need them because we have got way overabundance of them.

[Laughter.]

Senator TUBERVILLE. We are going to send them to Senator Grassley in Iowa. He loves hogs.

[Laughter.]

Senator TUBERVILLE. He loves hogs.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Fordyce. Thank you.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Thank you. Senator Fetterman, you are recognized.

Senator FETTERMAN. Oh, I cannot go in front of—that is the legend. No, really, please.

Chairman BOOZMAN. I think—

Senator GRASSLEY. I will be glad to go ahead, but—

Chairman BOOZMAN. Go ahead, Senator Grassley.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes, he is a legend in his own mind.

[Laughter.]

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes.

Senator GRASSLEY. Thank you very much, Senator Fetterman.

I know you are very qualified for this job because I know what you did in the previous Trump Administration, so there is no doubt about your qualifications. I have got some questions along some things that I have been believing in in farm programs, and I would like to have you answer.

I have been an advocate for one overall amount of money that one farmer can get, and that one farmer ought to have dirt under his fingernails in order to qualify for payments. I got nothing against big farmers getting bigger. I just do not think we ought to subsidize big farmers to get bigger because if we are subsidizing them, it drives up the price of land. It drives up the cost of cash rent, and most young farmers getting started farming are the type that have to rent their land and competition with people that maybe are farming 2,000 acres versus somebody farming 10,000 acres.

There ought to be not a limit on the size of the farm, but there ought to be some limit on how much the Federal Government's going to help because the principle of a safety net is that we have a safety net for the last 70 or 80 years because there is certain-sized farmers, small- or medium-sized farmers that do not have any control over Nixon freezing beef prices in 1970 or Carter putting a grain embargo on in 1979 or even the uncertainty that comes with the way that Trump is doing business.

I say we ought to be helping those that are hurt by things beyond their control, so that is why I advocate a limit on farm payments. Do you think that there should be any limit on how big a payment would go to any one farm operation?

Mr. FORDYCE. Well, Senator, thank you for that question, and I appreciate that. I do not know that I have thought about that necessarily, but I would say that whatever Congress says is under that definition of actively engaged, what the payment limitations are, certainly we will follow the letter of the law and enforce that as the agencies are doing today.

Senator GRASSLEY. I was not going to bring up actively engaged, but let me—I do not think I have so much a question on it, but it would be a matter of informing you how I see it within the Department of Agriculture. Sometimes Congress has expended the term “actively engaged” so people do not have to actually be involved in the management of the farm operation to get some help from the farm program. Some of it has been done through either guidance or regulation within the Department of Agriculture, and I have seen it expanded even under Democratic Secretaries of Agriculture, but for sure Republicans have done it. I think if you are involved in any of those regulations, you ought to review what they are and see if they have not gone too far because when third cousins can start getting some benefit from a family farm operation, it is not right, so I would just like to have you take a look at it.

Secretary Rollins is focused on supporting small farms. Do you agree that payment limits help protect small- and medium-sized

farmers, or is this something you want to say you have not given a lot of thought to yet?

Mr. FORDYCE. Senator, could you repeat the question?

Senator GRASSLEY. Yes, Senator Rollins is focused on supporting small farms. Now I get this from my conversations with her. I got it from her confirmation conversations we have had. Do you agree that payment limits help protect small- and medium-sized farms?

Mr. FORDYCE. I think—if I understand the question correctly, I think that payment limitations on smaller farms, the—typically, the producer that is operating a smaller farm does not necessarily bump up against the payment limitations. Farmers that are farming larger farms, more acres, a lot of times do bump up against those payment limitations.

Senator GRASSLEY. Okay.

Mr. FORDYCE. Did that answer your question, Senator? I am—because—

Senator GRASSLEY. Yes, you have answered it. Let me just finish with this. I hope I get a chance to have a conversation with you and explain what my motives are. I have already expressed them. I cannot express them much more than that, but I would like to have some consideration given to it. Thank you, Senator Fetterman.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Thank you. One of the concerns Senator Grassley has had that we have discussed is there are rules and regulations, and sometimes, there is concern that people maybe do not always follow those. We do expect, you know, that we look at making sure that people abide by the rules. A lot of this stuff got really—during the pandemic, in an effort to get payments out and this and that, things got really loose. In some cases they have never tightened back up. The natural tendency is to take advantage, so that is something that we are going to want you to look at and really delve into and make sure that whether it is this, whether it is nutrition, whatever the program is, we want to make sure that the appropriate people are getting what they are supposed to get versus, you know, something else.

Senator Fetterman.

Senator FETTERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Fordyce, I have read that you are a farmer.

Mr. FORDYCE. Yes. Yes, Senator.

Senator FETTERMAN. Yes, and so then I would want to thank you for that. I mean, the more farms that I visit across—you know, I am more and more convinced that that is a job that is too tough that I could ever do. People can walk to a grocery store, and they forget where it came from and the efforts and the things and the work that got in to just be able to walk in and just, you know, like that big thing. They really do not deserve the kind of credit that they do.

Regardless, beyond that, if you have ever been to Pennsylvania, and if you did, that would make you a very lucky guy, but in Pennsylvania, some people do not realize that that Mushroom Capital is right in Chester County in Pennsylvania. Were you aware?

Mr. FORDYCE. Senator, I was not, but I do have a good friend that is from Chester County, and he is currently the deputy administrator for Farm Programs at the Farm Service Agency.

Senator FETTERMAN. Oh, okay. Well, then that is a great connection then. Now, like a lot of people do not realize that, you know, we really are the Mushroom Capital of the world. Now, for me, I have always been pushing and because I really want to represent, you know, this very important industry in our state, pushing mushrooms to be eligible to the crop insurance for that. You know, I have introduced the bipartisan Protecting Mushroom Farmers Act with my PA colleagues. You know, and unfortunately that never really happened. I was disappointed that we were unable to use that authority to include mushrooms in crop insurance.

I would be grateful to maybe work together on this. For me, I am an advocate for an important industry, and I would love to see that included there. Really, I would like to offer you for what your thoughts with that.

Mr. FORDYCE. Well, Senator, that is—it is interesting. I am a big fan of mushrooms, all kinds actually. I do know certainly that the federal crop insurance system ensures a number of different crops. I do not know what the number is. It is over 100. It is less than 200, I think, but certainly do cover a lot. It is a lot—obviously, our Title I commodities, historic Title I commodities, but a lot of specialty crops.

I do know we had a question just a little bit ago about RMA and the federal crop insurance program, and I do believe that they are—they are pretty responsive when there is actually a need or there is a market. Now, there is a process by which those products come to the marketplace. I was actually—when I was the administrator, I actually sat in on a board meeting one afternoon, and there was a company that was talking about providing coverage for carrot seed, and so there is a policy for carrot seed. I—so it was interesting to watch the process happen.

Certainly, we can take a look at, you know, is there an opportunity with RMA and crop insurance? The Farm Service Agency also has a crop insurance program called NAP where a lot of times that can fill in the gaps of crops that are not covered by RMA at that time. Yes, let us take a look at that and see what we can do.

Senator FETTERMAN. Okay. All right. Cede back to the Chair. Thank you.

Chairman BOOZMAN. No, thank you, Senator Fetterman.

Senator Hoeven.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Fordyce, I am really pleased to see that you are willing to serve in this capacity, again, having served before and done excellent work the first time. I want to welcome you back and tell you how much I appreciate your work and how much I look forward to working with you.

I know you are going to be spending an awful lot of time in Arkansas due to the powerful Ag Committee Chairman. When you are not tied up in Arkansas, would you be willing to come to North Dakota?

Mr. FORDYCE. Well, yes, Senator, I would. As you know, you did invite me a couple of times the last time, and I think I came both times.

Senator HOEVEN. Yep. You will still come back again, won't you?

Mr. FORDYCE. Oh, absolutely. Yes, sir. In the summer would be better.

Senator HOEVEN. Yes.

[Laughter.]

Senator HOEVEN. Well, we will absolutely make sure it works, but we want to get you up there. We appreciate that and of course all the good work you do. Talk to me how the Chairman and myself, others work very hard on getting that disaster assistance, you know, passed. My understanding is it is going well. It has been very important to our state. Now you are starting, you know, on the weather piece. Talk to me how that is going.

Mr. FORDYCE. You know, I—the only information that I have is anything that I might see in the ag news, ag press. I have not had any conversations related to policy, policy development with the folks at FPAC. I do know, just because I have heard it from a number of farmers, that the first \$10 billion, the implementation of that was incredibly swift, seemed to be pretty seamless. You know, I would expect, while the second part of it is probably—just from the way I read some of the language is probably going to be a bit more complex and complicated. You know, I have confidence that that is being worked on, not—I would have no idea as to what the progress is in that at this point, but I have confidence that they are working on it.

Senator HOEVEN. Maybe somebody else brought up to you, but both the corn growers and soybean growers have been in to see us over the last week or so. In the case of the corn growers, they still have a lot of 2024 crop they have not moved. Of course, they have got 2025 crop coming, and they are not able to get that contracted right now. Same with the soybean guys. You know, we put the disaster assistance in place. We put, you know, important components of the farm program in place, ARC/PLC updates, enhancements to crop insurance to make it more affordable in the 03-B, but, you know, we have got to have some sales going. You know, any thoughts in terms of what we can do there, you know, to try to address some of these sales that we need to make?

Mr. FORDYCE. Certainly. You know, I know that the market—I know you mentioned corn and soybeans, and, you know, that market is not incredibly robust right now. You know, if I am confirmed, we actually are going to have to change the structure of our farm. Currently, my wife and I—and my wife is sitting right behind me, Senator. She is the marketer for the—

Senator HOEVEN. She looks awfully young, Richard.

[Laughter.]

Mr. FORDYCE. Well, would you believe we were married 36 years ago yesterday?

Senator HOEVEN. I would not. I would not.

[Laughter.]

Mr. FORDYCE. She likes that answer.

[Laughter.]

Senator HOEVEN. Are you sure he has the right number there?

[Laughter.]

Mr. FORDYCE. It is, yes.

Senator HOEVEN. Well, congratulations on that, for sure.

Mr. FORDYCE. You know, from a marketing standpoint, a sales standpoint, I am not completely sure why that is happening, unless it is just the fact that the market is not in a place where they want to move grain. I think, you know, we have—in the first administration when I was the administrator, we had a very open dialog with a lot of organizations, both commodity groups, farm groups, conservation groups. I would commit—if confirmed, I would commit to visiting with those organizations and understanding a bit more about what that problem is.

Senator HOEVEN. Yes. Well, we have some work to do there. As you know, in the first Trump Administration, we worked together with Commodity Credit Corp., which is funded out of the Ag Appropriations Committee. You know, we are going to need to continue to do that work with our Chairman and Ranking Member on Ag. I know you are committed to making sure that we do that as needed. I am looking for a yep or a no.

Mr. FORDYCE. Yes. Yes, Senator. Yes, for sure.

Senator HOEVEN. Okay. Again, thanks. Look forward to working with you and appreciate your service. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Thank you. Senator Schiff.

Senator SCHIFF. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Fordyce, thank you for being here, appreciate your work.

During the first Trump Administration, you oversaw the implementation of the Market Facilitation Program, as well as the Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program. Both of those programs were implemented in such a way that, as I talked to farmers throughout California, they found that they had a lot of difficulty in accessing them because of the different nature of the specialty crops they grow than farmers in other parts of the country. Will you commit to working with me to ensure that any future rollout of USDA financial assistance is more fairly distributed, that is, that specialty crop farmers are equally able to access it as other farmers?

Mr. FORDYCE. Yes, Senator, and thank you for that question. You know, I do appreciate very much the agriculture nature of the State of California. It is the most agriculture-diverse state in the country, and I appreciate that and understand that fairly well. I would not want to completely tell you that I know how all of those crops are grown, but do appreciate that.

You know, and I think you make a good point on the programs that you mentioned, and part of that was due to the fact that the agencies had not worked with those commodities, those crops, and those growers really before. You know, I felt like we were fairly innovative in trying to get the word out and the message out, and certainly through our outreach programs and communications programs attempted to do that more on a personal level. Then we discovered that it worked—it would work much better if we were having those conversations with the organizations that represent those growers. United Fresh and others were organizations that we partnered with, which we had never partnered with before, to get that information out. It was a little bit, it was probably a little bit of a slow start at the beginning of the program, but I think it be-

came quite robust by the end of both of the programs that you mentioned.

Absolutely, I will—I would commit to working with you if there is another program similar to that to make sure we are talking to the right folks and getting the right message out there.

Senator SCHIFF. Great. I appreciate that, and we are happy to help facilitate those meetings with those associations.

I also want to raise a concern about USDA's ongoing rollout of disaster funding, as authorized by the American Relief Act of 2025. First, I am concerned that the rules USDA has created in establishing block grants for states which faced disaster in the past few years make it pretty much impossible for California to receive aid.

Second, I hope that in the second round of the Supplemental Disaster Relief Program that it is developed in such a way that specialty crop and diversified farmers may more easily access relief. I recently sent a letter to the administration on this issue, and I know you are not currently at USDA, but are you committed to working together on this matter and others so we can make sure that California and specialty crop producers more generally receive their fair degree of USDA support?

Just to give an illustration, some of the disaster relief is focused on hurricanes and only hurricanes. We have had hurricanes that turned into tropical storms when they went inland that did a lot of damage. Of course, we have been ravaged by atmospheric rivers and the flooding that they result in and fires. To exclude certain disasters and only include others that, frankly, are visited on other states seems very inequitable for the West. I want to make sure you are committed to working on that issue as well to make sure that these decisions are made in a nonpartisan and nongeographic way that is accessible for all farmers throughout the country.

Mr. FORDYCE. Yes, Senator, absolutely would commit to that. I cannot speak much to the progress of those disaster programs or the cause of loss for the declarations, but yes, would commit to certainly working with you moving forward.

Senator SCHIFF. One other issue if I could, over 1/3 of the country's vegetables and 3/4 of the country's fruits and nuts are grown in California, but just nine percent of farms growing specialty crops are insured. Given your past experience at USDA, can you speak to the challenges that specialty crop producers face in accessing crop insurance and what you think you can do as Under Secretary to address it?

Mr. FORDYCE. Yes, that is a great question. You know, I know that the Risk Management Agency or the NAP program through the Farm Service Agency insures—and we talked about this just a little bit ago, and I am not sure how many crops that is, but it is a lot. You know, I think if there is not a safety net/risk management product available to a specific crop grown in California, we can get—there is a process at RMA by which we can start the process to look at the opportunities to potentially have a product that is available to them. We—I would commit that we will be taking a look at that.

Senator SCHIFF. I appreciate it, and I think some of the challenge, Chairman, is that these specialty crops and trees that are a long-term investment are really different, and some of the his-

toric practices that go into some of these grant applications are more suitable and easier to access if you are a commodity crop grower. It may also require some modifications to make sure that all farmers can participate. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Senator Marshall.

Senator MARSHALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, Mr. Fordyce. We are glad to have you here. My first question will have to do with AGI limits and off-farm income. Personally, I was real impressed, and my farmers back home, how swiftly USDA administered the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program, the Supplemental Disaster Relief Programs, as well to the tune of over \$600 million to Kansas farmers alone. What I am hearing back from now is concerns about these AGI limits and their off-farm income.

More and more of our farmers, because of these tough economic—record drop in net farm income last year, they are working a job—a full-time job off the farm. Their spouse is working full-time off the farm with negative income. They are not hitting the 75 percent income requirement, but farming is their primary occupation. Any thoughts how you can work with our office to fix this problem?

Mr. FORDYCE. Yes, absolutely. You know, the AGI limit is \$900,000—well, in most programs, I think it is \$900,000 adjusted gross income. Yes, absolutely, be happy to, if confirmed, to work with you and your staff to understand—I guess maybe understand the issue maybe just a little better.

Senator MARSHALL. Okay. I look forward to that.

Next, I want to talk about something near and dear to my heart, and that is the health of Americans. Sixty percent of Americans have a chronic disease, and we certainly believe that a healthy, nutritious diet can make some improvements. It is my firm belief that healthy soil makes healthy food, makes healthy people.

As we look at these conservation programs within EQIP and RCPP, how can we get geared up to focus on that healthy soil, whether it is precision agriculture or technology? Any thoughts how we can update these programs or really prioritize soil health?

Mr. FORDYCE. Yes, so I think—that is a great question, Senator, and again, another area that I am pretty passionate about, improving soil health, being an adopter of technology that makes sense. You know, I think that—it seems to me—and I do not know—I do not know really how to articulate this, but it seems to me that we are learning new things about soil health. You know, if you would have told me 10 years ago that after I harvested my cash crop in the fall that I am going to plant something else on it, I would have said, well, why would I do that? Well, you know, there were some folks at the time that knew that introducing biodiversity into the soil structure was a very healthy thing, and it created some benefits within that soil structure and so on.

I say that to say that innovation happens and is happening very quickly in that very space, and I would commit to trying to at least keep up with it and understanding what kind of opportunities there could be for FPAC agencies that could help either promote that, make folks aware of it, or whatever, but would certainly—

Senator MARSHALL. You know, as we get geared up for, you know, a farm bill and a conservation title, I think there are some great opportunities. We have early adapters out there that are preventing 90 percent of the chemicals from leaving the field. They are using 60 percent less fertilizers, pesticides. We have the opportunity to add bio stimulants back into the soil as opposed to traditional fertilizers as well. I think that we need some help from USDA to help us modernize conservation programs so that we continue to grow more with less, and I am asking your commitment to doing that.

Mr. FORDYCE. Yes, Senator, I would commit to doing that. You know, you mentioned some, but I would—you know, biological nitrogen's that—you know, that are put into the soil and throughout the growing season, that biological nitrogen is feeding that corn plant or whatever grass, you know, it might be. Certainly, there is a lot that has been learned. There is a lot more that can be learned, but certainly commit to working with you.

Senator MARSHALL. Certainly, part of the puzzle is, again, we have these early adapters and it is working, but now we have got to spread the gospel and get more people using them. There may be two or three years, Mr. Chairman, when we are decreasing the commodity production as we go through this transition from traditional agriculture into modern regenerative agriculture as well, and I think we need to somehow stabilize that as well.

Mr. FORDYCE. No, I agree. I, again, commit to working with you and your staff as we maybe learn together while we go forward.

Senator MARSHALL. Thank you so much. We look forward to working with you.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Senator Ernst.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Chairman Boozman.

To our witness today, Mr. Fordyce, congratulations on your nomination to you and your family. Welcome to the Committee.

I appreciate your testimony and your willingness to fill such an important role within our administration. I am also going to start by saying that you have quite a team waiting for you when you get to USDA, including a fellow Iowan, Pat Swanson, who is the administrator of the Risk Management Agency, as well as one of my former staffers as well, Matthew, who is now serving at FPAC. Alongside these great folks and with your extensive ag background as well, I have no doubt you are going to be able to hit the ground running, and I am really excited about it.

Mr. Fordyce, a phrase I have heard you use, "one farmer, one form." Okay. I really like that. I know it resonates with my producers back in Iowa as well. A lot of our farmers are still juggling multiple forms across various agencies, and the process is very time-consuming and redundant. While some producers prefer walking into their local FSA offices with physical yield maps, others are ready for a digital option. We need a system that will work for both those that prefer to put their hands on a map and those that would like to do it digitally.

That same modernization is desperately needed when it comes to how USDA tracks and monitors foreign land ownership in the United States. The Agriculture Foreign Investment Disclosure Act, AFIDA, was signed into law in 1978 and has been barely touched

since then. Even today, foreign land purchases are reported on paper, and staff must manually reenter each submission, a process that is inefficient and prone to errors, and I have seen this firsthand.

Last year, USDA's reaction to my oversight letter with Senator Fetterman was to add a disclaimer on their website saying "Typographical errors may occur because of the manual nature of data entry." I am saying, Mr. Fordyce, that this is absolutely unacceptable, and I am glad that the Trump Administration agrees with me.

The recent commitments from Secretary Rollins to modernize the AFIDA reporting process is welcome news. It is a much-needed step to protect American farmland from our foreign adversaries. In the upcoming farm bill, I am hopeful we build on that momentum with my FARMLAND Act to make clear our food supply is not for sale, at least not to our adversaries.

Mr. Fordyce, if confirmed, will you commit to making USDA's digital modernization both for farmers and programs like AFIDA a top priority?

Mr. FORDYCE. Yes, Senator. Appreciate your comments and certainly your questions. First of all, let me say that Pat Swanson is—she is fantastic.

Senator ERNST. She is the best.

Mr. FORDYCE. Yes, she is great. I have known her a number of years.

You know, the "one farmer, one form" was just, I guess, me thinking about like what could be something that was short and maybe got to the point. I would say that we—so we started to work on that a little bit in the first Trump Administration, did not quite get it to the finish line from a modernizing acreage reporting standpoint. We have talked quite a bit during the hearing about technology and precision agriculture and those type things. You know, we do not know the number of farmers that employ precision agriculture on their farms. Depending on where you are located in the country, you know, that number can—that number—that percentage number can be pretty high.

Those farmers right now are sharing that data with their seed supplier, their fertilizer company, their crop insurance company, if that crop insurance company has the ability to accept it. I think it makes a lot of sense to be able to get you—get the three agencies and to—maybe more than NRCS, but to get them in a position to be able to accept that data.

You know, my hope would be is that, as a farmer is planting his or her crop, that they are actually populating a—an acreage report as they are progressing through planting season. I mean, that would be fantastic. That certainly will be priority one from a technology modernization standpoint, and AFIDA as well. I was director of the Missouri Department of Agriculture. I was responsible for that reporting at the state level and then as the FSA administrator. There is certainly probably some better technologies to be able to capture that information.

Senator ERNST. Absolutely. Well, thank you, Mr. Fordyce. I do have some questions I will submit for the record regarding 45Z as well. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Thank you, Chair.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Thank you. Senator Justice.

Senator JUSTICE. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and all those in the room and especially you, Mr. Fordyce, and everything.

My comments are going to be just generalized. I mean, I could get in the weeds on a lot of stuff with you and everything, but it is refreshing to think that we have got a superstar from Missouri, which has done all kinds of stuff. He is a farmer, you know. It is so refreshing to have you.

With that being said, you know, you may not know this, but—and I do not say this terribly braggadociously, but a little bit, you know, my family's been in the farming business for 7,000 years. With all that being said, we are eight times national corn growing champions. I could get in the weeds right with you.

I absolutely want you to know that I support you through and through. I know a lot about you. Absolutely, I am so proud of the job that you are going to do because you are going to do so much good for the greatest people on the planet, and that is all there is to it. These people are the most giving, the kindest. They have the most passion for what they do. It is off the chart. Innovative, are you kidding me? They are a production engine like you cannot fathom. What their contribution is to every single one of us is just limitless.

I absolutely want you to protect them and help them and do anything and everything in your power to legally, no matter what it may be, do everything you can possibly do to help them because I just think—and I have said it 10,000 times, but I just think tomorrow if they decided, well, I am going to leave the farm, I am going to sell out, they would do so much better financially, it is unbelievable, but yet they have a love and a passion for what they do that drives them to do greatness for all of us every single day.

With all that being said, you know, Senator Marshall just spoke about innovation, and I just thought to myself, my goodness, are you kidding me? From where we have come to where we are today and what the horizons are in the future, it is limitless beyond belief.

You know, Senator Ernst just said, you know, “one farmer, one form.” Well, I do not know why we cannot almost in America get to one American, one form. I mean, we do not need to keep making it so difficult for all of us all the time.

All I can do is just ask you to just do what I know you will do, and that is you will stand up for the greatest people on the planet in my book.

That is all I have got. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman BOOZMAN. I think that was very well said. Thank you, Senator Justice.

Senator Bennet is on his way, so let's see what we got here.

Mr. FORDYCE. Senator, thank you and appreciated those words. That was very, very well said.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Senator Bennet is on the way, so we will wait just a minute or so for him to get here. Thank you. Appreciate you.

Senator BENNET. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Take your time. Senator Bennet, when you get ready.

Senator BENNET. Thank you. I really appreciate it. We were at the Intelligence Committee. Actually, we were not, I was, but I appreciate it.

Nice to see you, Mr. Fordyce. Thank you for being here. I wanted to ask you first about staffing and red tape. Colorado producers are always telling me how important local NRCS and FSA offices are, yet these offices are stretched very, very thin, as you probably know, and they have lost valuable experience and know-how in recent months. I am just curious, with fewer staff on the ground, how you are going to cut red tape and streamline processes to keep up with demand and to make sure that we can ensure timely and on-the-ground support out of these local offices?

Every single year that I have been here, I have had this conversation with people in Republican administrations and Democratic administrations, and everybody commits to do the same thing, and things never, ever get better. Let me ask for your perspective.

Mr. FORDYCE. Well, Senator, that is a great question, you know, certainly something that is certainly important. You know, I said earlier, I was talking about FSA staff, but this goes across the mission area. You know, they are some of the best people you will ever meet, whether they are implementing conservation or they are helping a farmer sign up for a program or whatever. They are the best people. They are passionate about agriculture and certainly understand it.

You know, I think that any time there is an opportunity to reduce red tape, I think we ought to look at what that is. You know, I am—I hate to answer this way because I have had to do that on a few questions today, but, you know, I am not in the building. It has been a number of years since I have been a part of USDA and so understanding what that red tape is and how we can reduce that, I mean, I think that is just good government and good management.

Senator BENNET. I appreciate that. As you get into the job, I hope we will have the opportunity to talk about it more, and this Committee maybe should have a conversation with folks about that in the Department. Do you have a view—I was not here earlier—about how to rebuild the staffing in the agency?

Mr. FORDYCE. Well, you know, and I have not—I do not have access to the data of the folks that either took the early retirement and, you know, where they are, where those numbers are geographically, how do they—how is that dispersed across the country? Certainly, looking forward to—if confirmed, to get in and looking at that data and understanding, you know where those places are, where we may have some coverage issues.

I think that—and we talked a little bit about technology improvements and things, and I think—I mean, I think we can bridge some gaps there if we can figure out ways where we talk—you talked about red tape. We also talked about some—earlier talked about some antiquated platforms that support a lot of the programs. The one I am more familiar with would be the Farm Service Agency

and looking at ways to improving that would be another thing that I would——

Senator BENNET. Yes, sorry, Mr. Fordyce——

Mr. FORDYCE. No, no, no.

Senator BENNET [continuing]. I have one more question to ask. I would tell you that I have never heard a producer—and these folks are generally fairly sensitive about bloated government. They are fairly sensitive about inefficient government and frustrated with inefficient government. I have never heard one of them say there are too many people in these offices. What I have heard them say is that they are not getting the people that they need, and in Colorado, at least, we are not paying the salaries we need to be able to attract people to these offices. I think we had massive challenges before these layoffs, and those challenges have only grown. Just stay in touch and we will have to continue to work on this together.

Let me ask you one other question. In Colorado, farmers and ranchers manage over 30 million acres of land. A lot of that land is in areas that are facing threats of drought and wildfire. Programs like EQIP and CRP are not just conservation—you know, they are not just about conservation in Colorado, they are about helping producers literally stay afloat. These tools give farmers a way to manage risks in a changing environment and climate while keeping their operations running and providing financial stability. How can we strengthen these conservation tools, make them more responsive to our producers to ensure that they remain a reliable part of the farm safety net?

Mr. FORDYCE. Yes, I think—and we talked a little bit about CRP earlier in the hearing, and I think that CRP has evolved over the years and it is—you know, I think there are over 40 different CRP practices that are available that accomplish different goals depending on what that landowner wants to accomplish, but certainly would look forward to visiting with you if confirmed, your staff, to understand more about issues that may be specific to Colorado, but would commit to continuing the conversation.

Senator BENNET. I appreciate that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your indulgence and thank you for having this hearing.

Chairman BOOZMAN. You are always worth the wait.

[Laughter.]

Chairman BOOZMAN. Thank you for being so active on the Committee.

Before adjourning, I ask for unanimous consent to include in the hearing record a statement by Senator Schmitt of Missouri supporting the nomination of Mr. Fordyce to the position of Under Secretary. Without objection, so ordered.

[The letter can be found on pages 39–40 in the appendix.]

Chairman BOOZMAN. Thank you again for being here and appearing before the Committee.

To our Committee Members, we appreciate their participation and, as always, the hard work of our staff in getting these things together.

The record will remain open for two business days. Today's hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:23 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

JULY 23, 2025

**Opening Statement of Richard Fordyce
Nominee for Under Secretary of Farm, Production and Conservation
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry**

July 23, 2025

Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and distinguished members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as the Under Secretary for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Production and Conservation mission area. I want to thank President Trump for nominating me to serve in this role, and I want to thank Secretary Rollins for her trust and confidence in supporting my nomination.

Since I was five years old, I knew I wanted to be a farmer. That early passion for agriculture has been the driving force throughout my life, shaping my decisions and inspiring my commitment to learning, growing, and giving back to the agricultural community. Every step of my career in agriculture has been marked by a willingness to raise my hand, take on challenges, and contribute to the strength and resilience of our farming systems.

My farmer volunteer journey began on my local county Farm Bureau board and led to leading the Young Farmer programs in both Missouri and the American Farm Bureau. I have served the soybean checkoff for a total of over 25 years, both on the Missouri Soybean Merchandising Council and the United Soybean Board. My passion for soil conservation led to an appointment to the Missouri Soil & Water Districts Commission, where I ultimately served as Chair. Some of this volunteer work caught the eye of Governor Jay Nixon and he asked me to join his administration as Director of the Missouri Department of Agriculture. Following the Nixon administration, I was appointed as the Missouri State Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency, serving in that role for 6 months. I was then appointed as the Administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency.

This personal journey guides my vision for the Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) mission area: to deliver an effective, efficient, predictable, and transparent service to farmers across the nation. At FPAC, we have a duty to serve as a steadfast ally to those who work tirelessly to feed, fuel, and clothe the world. This means not only providing consistent support for our producers, but also modernizing the tools used for delivering these programs across the mission area by our amazing and dedicated staff.

Disaster payments are one such critical tool, and my commitment is to align them with the goals set forth by President Trump and Congress—making them more timely, fair, and impactful. Our farmers deserve nothing less than a system that supports recovery and resilience in the face of adversity.

Additionally, I believe in the incredible potential of private and public partnerships to drive innovation and success in agriculture. By fostering collaboration between government, private industry, and communities, we can unlock new opportunities and create solutions that benefit both producers and consumers alike.

Together, with a shared commitment to the values of integrity, transparency, and service, we can ensure that FPAC continues to be a beacon of support and progress for America's farmers and ranchers. This covers all aspects of FPAC, including programs that support conservation of our vital natural resources, programs designed to respond to disasters, and tools to help manage risk and access to credit, all of which are so vitally important to agriculture. This vision is not just about today—it's about building a sustainable, thriving future for the next generation of agricultural leaders.

To the members of the Committee, I appreciated the time to have met with many of you and your respective staff before today's hearing. The opportunity to learn about what is important to you and the people of your state was invaluable. My commitment would be to continue those conversations, so we are as well informed on all the various issues across these great United States.

I am truly humbled to be considered for this position. If confirmed, I commit to following Secretary Rollins' leadership, and using the experience gained through my years of varied agriculture leadership, to support the Farm Service Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Risk Management Agency, all of which make up the FPAC mission area.

I have always raised my hand, dedicating my life to the service of improving our industry. I look forward to working with this committee in the future and I thank each and every one of you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

**DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE
RECORD**

JULY 23, 2025

March 21, 2025

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
425 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Thune, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Boozman, and Ranking Member Klobuchar:

The undersigned organizations write to support the timely confirmation of Richard Fordyce to serve as the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC).

We greatly appreciate the U.S. Senate's bipartisan confirmation of USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins last month. As you know, USDA's undersecretaries manage significant offices, programs, and staff critical to advancing the department's missions related to farmer safety net programs, trade policy, food safety, conservation, crop insurance, forests, and other vital areas. FPAC's extensive mission includes administering critical farm loan, disaster assistance, safety net, risk management, and conservation programs.

Mr. Fordyce's qualifications and prior experience as a farmer, Administrator of USDA's Farm Service Agency, Director of Missouri's Department of Agriculture, and Chair of the Missouri State Soil & Water Districts Commission have prepared him to be very effective in leading FPAC's mission to serve our nation's farmers and ranchers and effectively administer commodity, conservation, crop insurance, and additional programs that they depend on.

We acknowledge the challenges associated with vetting, holding confirmation hearings for, and securing floor time to vote on USDA nominees. As you are aware, farmers nationwide are struggling with low commodity prices while input costs remain at or near record-high levels. America's farmers and rural communities depend on the effective administration of USDA's FPAC programs. We urge you to prioritize the consideration and confirmation of Richard Fordyce to provide FPAC with the leadership required to address our country's wavering farm economy and fulfill the agency's vital missions.

Thank you for your attention to this request. We look forward to continuing to work with you to support our country's producers and agricultural communities.

Sincerely,

National Organizations:

Agricultural Retailers Association
 American Association of Crop Insurers
 American Biogas Council
 American Bird Conservancy
 American Farm Bureau Federation
 American Feed Industry Association
 American Forest Foundation
 American Seed Trade Association
 American Society of Agronomy
 American Soybean Association
 American Sugar Alliance
 American Sugarbeet Growers Association
 Association of Conservation Executive Directors
 Association of Equipment Manufacturers
 ClearPath Action
 Crop Insurance and Reinsurance Bureau
 Crop Science Society of America
 CropLife America
 Delta Waterfowl
 Ducks Unlimited
 Farm Credit Council
 International Certified Crop Advisers
 International Fresh Produce Association
 National Association of Conservation Districts
 National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
 National Association of Wheat Growers
 National Conservation District Employees Association
 National Corn Growers Association
 National Cotton Council
 National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
 National Farmers Union
 National Grain and Feed Association
 National Milk Producers Federation
 National Pork Producers Council
 National Sorghum Producers
 National Wild Turkey Federation
 Pheasants Forever
 Pollinator Partnership
 Quail Forever
 Soil Science Society of America
 The Conservation Fund
 The Fertilizer Institute
 Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
 USA Rice

State and Regional Organizations:

Agribusiness Council of Indiana
 Agricultural Council of Arkansas
 Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts
 Arkansas Rice
 Arkansas Soybean Association
 Association of Illinois Soil & Water Conservation Districts
 California Association of Resource Conservation Districts
 California Rice Commission
 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Soil and Water Conservation Districts
 Delaware Association of Conservation Districts
 Florida Rice Growers
 Georgia Association of Conservation Districts
 Georgia-Florida Soybean Association
 Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts
 Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
 Iowa Soybean Association
 Kansas Agribusiness Retailers Association
 Kansas Association of Conservation Districts
 Kansas Grain and Feed Association
 Kansas Soybean Association
 Louisiana Rice Producers' Group
 Malpai Borderlands Group
 Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts
 Michigan Association of Conservation Districts
 Michigan Soybean Association
 Mid Atlantic Soybean Association
 Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
 Minnesota Soybean Growers Association
 Mississippi Rice Council
 Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
 Missouri Rice Council
 Missouri Soybean Association
 Nebraska Soybean Association
 Nevada Association of Conservation Districts
 North Carolina Agribusiness Council
 North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts
 Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
 Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts
 Oregon Association of Conservation Districts
 South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts
 South Carolina Corn and Soybean Association
 South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts
 South Dakota Soybean Association
 Southern Crop Production Association

Texas Grain & Feed Association
Texas Rice Producers Legislative Group
Washington Association of Conservation Districts
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts

July 21, 2025

The Honorable John Boozman
Chairman
Senate Agriculture, Nutrition,
and Forestry Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture, Nutrition,
and Forestry Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Boozman and Ranking Member Klobuchar:

We write to provide our strong endorsement of Richard Fordyce for his appointment as Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Having witnessed Richard's strong presence and leadership in Missouri agriculture for many years, we can confidently attest to his exceptional qualifications, passion for agriculture, and unwavering dedication to supporting America's farmers and ranchers.

As a lifelong farmer in northwest Missouri, Richard has a firsthand understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by agricultural producers in our region and around the country. His experience raising corn, soybeans, and cattle on his family farm, combined with his leadership roles, make him uniquely qualified to effectively oversee key agencies such as the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Risk Management Agency (RMA). During his previous tenure as Administrator of FSA under the first Trump Administration, Richard worked directly with farmers and ranchers, applying his firsthand knowledge of farming to ensure that their needs were met. His involvement with FSA, NRCS, and RMA throughout his career speaks to his deep understanding of their operations and how vital they are to sustaining rural communities, not only in Missouri but across the nation.

Richard's commitment to agriculture extends beyond his family farm. He has been a tireless advocate for rural America through his leadership in organizations such as the Missouri Soil and Water Districts Commission, the Missouri Soybean Merchandising Council, the United Soybean Board, and Missouri Farm Bureau. Richard honorably served as Director of the Missouri Department of Agriculture, and is familiar with the strong partnership state departments must maintain with USDA. His dedication to soil conservation, agricultural innovation, and rural prosperity has earned him numerous accolades, including the Missouri Farm Bureau Outstanding Service to Agriculture Award and the Agricultural Leaders of Tomorrow Alumnus of the Year Award.

Moreover, Richard's ability to communicate the value of agriculture and rural communities is one of his best skills. He understands the power of telling the story of agriculture in a compelling and effective way, ensuring that the voices of farmers, ranchers, and rural families are heard at every level of decision-making.

Given his wealth of experience, strong leadership skills, and a deep-rooted understanding of Missouri's agricultural landscape, Richard Fordyce is exceptionally qualified to serve as Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation.

We strongly urge the Committee and the full Senate to confirm Richard Fordyce for this important role and are confident that he will serve with distinction and integrity. His dedication to improving the lives of farmers and ranchers will undoubtedly have a lasting, positive impact on agriculture across the nation.

Thank you for your consideration and continued support of agriculture in America.

Sincerely,

Missouri Farm Bureau
Missouri Agribusiness Association
Missouri Farmers Care
Missouri Forest Products Association
Missouri Cattlemen's Association
Missouri Soybean Association
Missouri Dairy
Missouri Corn Growers Association
Missouri Pork Association
The Poultry Federation



NATIONAL CATTLEMEN'S BEEF ASSOCIATION
CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY

April 4, 2025

The Honorable John Boozman
 Chairman
 Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
 United States Senate
 328A Russell Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
 Ranking Member
 Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
 United States Senate
 328A Russell Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Chairman Boozman and Ranking Member Klobuchar:

We write today to express our strong support for Richard Fordyce to serve as the next Undersecretary of Agriculture for Farm Production and Conservation. As the nation's oldest and largest trade association representing American cattle producers, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) advocates for policies that support and uphold agriculture's essential role in driving America's economy. With more than 26,000 direct members and over 178,000 members through our 44 affiliate states. The cattle industry is the single largest sector of U.S. agriculture, leaving an undeniable mark on our nation's history, economic growth, cultural heritage, and environmental conservation. Cattle producers steward one-third of the U.S. continental landmass and serve as the backbone of rural communities. Our livelihoods – and the food security of the nation – depend on commonsense, collaborative leadership at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That is why we urge the Senate to confirm Mr. Fordyce to the position of Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation without delay.

A nation's most fundamental responsibility is ensuring its own food security. The USDA's Office of the Secretary plays a crucial role in fulfilling this duty—not only for the families who rely on a safe and abundant food supply at home but also for consumers around the world and the producers whose dedication has made American agriculture the most productive and sustainable in the world. The role of Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation is vital to the future of U.S. agriculture, requiring a leader with deep expertise, sound judgment, and a commitment to ensuring the industry's long-term success. Cattle producers are directly affected by the USDA's efforts in risk management, conservation, disaster relief, and farm safety nets. We have long valued our partnership with the USDA and look forward to continuing this collaborative relationship with Mr. Fordyce.

Mr. Fordyce's extensive background as a fourth-generation soybean, corn, and beef cattle farmer from Bethany, Missouri, coupled with his deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing American agriculture, makes him uniquely qualified to oversee the USDA's critical functions. Throughout his career, he has been a steadfast advocate for agricultural producers, working to protect their interests while ensuring that policies are practical, science-based, and supportive of a strong and sustainable industry. In his role as Administrator of the Farm Service Agency (FSA) from 2018 to 2021, Mr. Fordyce demonstrated his capacity for providing leadership that directly supported American farmers and ranchers. He has worked extensively on policy issues that directly impact the cattle industry, including agricultural risk management, conservation programs, and disaster assistance. His ability to navigate complex challenges while keeping the needs of livestock producers at the forefront has earned him the trust and respect of stakeholders across our industry.

Richard Fordyce's leadership will bring a much-needed focus on promoting policies that strengthen U.S. agriculture's competitiveness, safeguard American food security, and ensure that rural communities remain vibrant and resilient. His deep knowledge of the issues facing cattle producers, coupled with his commitment to practical, producer-focused solutions, will be invaluable in his position within USDA.

The Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation plays a crucial role in supporting American agriculture and shaping the future of our rural communities. With Mr. Fordyce's demonstrated experience and commitment to the industry, we are confident that he will continue to uphold the values of American agriculture while addressing its most pressing challenges.

NCBA appreciates the opportunity to provide our input in support of Richard Fordyce's nomination, and we strongly urge the Senate to confirm his appointment without delay.

Sincerely,

National Cattlemen's Beef Association
Alabama Cattlemen's Association
Arizona Cattle Feeders' Association
Arizona Cattle Growers' Association
Arkansas Cattlemen's Association
California Cattlemen's Association
Colorado Cattlemen's Association
Colorado Livestock Association
Florida Cattlemen's Association
Georgia Cattlemen's Association
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council
Idaho Cattle Association
Illinois Beef Association
Indiana Beef Cattle Association
Iowa Cattlemen's Association
Kansas Livestock Association
Kentucky Cattlemen's Association
Louisiana Cattlemen's Association
Michigan Cattlemen's Association
Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association
Mississippi Cattlemen's Association
Missouri Cattlemen's Association
Montana Stockgrowers Association
Nebraska Cattlemen
Nevada Cattlemen's Association
New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association
New York Beef Producers' Association
North Carolina Cattlemen's Association

North Dakota Stockmen's Association
Ohio Cattlemen's Association
Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association
South Carolina Cattlemen's Association
South Dakota Cattlemen's Association
Tennessee Cattlemen's Association
Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association
Texas Cattle Feeders Association
Utah Cattlemen's Association
Virginia Cattlemen's Association
Washington Cattle Feeders Association
Washington Cattlemen's Association
West Virginia Cattlemen's Association
Wyoming Stock Growers Association

**Introductory Statement by Senator Eric Schmitt for Richard Fordyce
Nominee for Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm, Production and Conservation
U.S. Department of Agriculture
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry**

July 23, 2025

Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and distinguished members of the Committee:

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and Members of the Committee.

Today, I have the honor and the privilege speaking in support of Richard Fordyce, President Trump's nominee to be the Undersecretary of Agriculture for Food Production and Conservation.

I've seen Richard Fordyce's leadership up close for years, and I can say without hesitation — he's the real deal. Richard is not some bureaucrat with a title. He's a fourth-generation farmer from Bethany, Missouri, who knows the work, the sacrifice, and the pride that comes from agriculture.

Richard's background gives him a rare perspective that makes him a perfect fit to oversee this critical mission. Not only does he have a storied career in service to Missouri, but also to President Trump, and the United States.

Starting his service in Missouri, Richard has been a Farm Bureau volunteer since 1985, having previously served as President of his local Farm Bureau's board for 17 years. As well, Richard served on the Missouri Soil and Water Commission, the Missouri Soybean Merchandising Council, and the United Soybean Council, where he was appointed for eleven years.

Lastly, but certainly not least, Richard served as a dedicated director of Missouri's Department of Agriculture for four years—under a Democrat I might add. There, his accomplishments go farther than I can speak. To name one that speaks to Richard's leadership, he led a statewide initiative with the focus of increasing value across all sectors of Missouri's beef industry. Thanks to his efforts, the state regularly ranks among the top three in the nation for cattle and calf production.

Richard's dedication to Missouri Agriculture has not gone unnoticed, can be shown by his numerous accolades, including the Missouri Farm Bureau Outstanding Service to Agriculture Award and the Agricultural Leaders of Tomorrow Alumnus of the Year Award.

At the federal level, Richard's experience expands even further. First appointed by President Trump as Missouri's State Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency, where he served

with distinction. Richard quickly set himself apart as a strong leader at USDA, being elevated to the Administrator of the Farm Service Agency less than a year later.

During his time as Administrator, Richard worked to bring the producer's voice to the department's political leadership when making decisions. This is a top priority for Richard.

As ten of Missouri's top commodity groups put it: "[Richard] understands the power of telling the story of agriculture in a compelling and effective way, ensuring that the voices of farmers, ranchers, and rural families are heard at every level of decision-making."

Finally, one of Richard's most relevant qualifications for this committee is his leadership at FSA during the implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill—experience I believe we all hope he'll be called on to put to use again soon.

The Farm Production and Conservation section of the United States Department of Agriculture is, in my belief, the most vital mission inside USDA. Every day, FSA's front-line specialists, analysts, and technicians work with our producers to ensure they can have face-to-face interaction with the Department, and most importantly, get assistance navigating the complex regulations and programs requirements that affect their livelihood.

As stated by President Trump: "[Richard will] ensure that our incredible American Farmers and Ranchers have the support they need to feed our Great Nation, and the World."

I have not a doubt in my mind that Richard will be a trusted advisor to Secretary Rollins and President Trump as they work to realign USDA to what matters most—putting our farmers and ranchers first. I look forward to seeing Richard's hardworking, Show-Me attitude return to Washington.

Mr. Chairman, it is truly to speak in support of Richard Fordyce to this committee, and I urge his swift nomination.

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, & FORESTRY
Questions for Executive Nominees
119th Congress: Part I

1. Basic Biographical Information

Please provide the following information.

<i>Position to Which You Have Been Nominated</i>	
<u>Name of Position</u>	<u>Date of Nomination</u>
USDA Under Secretary FPAC	January 22, 2025

<i>Current Legal Name</i>			
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>
Richard	Lynn	Fordyce	

<i>Addresses</i>					
<u>Residential Address</u> (do not include street address)			<u>Office Address</u> (include street address)		
			Street:		
City: Bethany	State: MO	Zip: 64424	City:	State:	Zip:

<i>Other Names Used</i>						
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>	<small>Check if Maiden Name</small>	<u>Name Used From</u> (Year) (Check box if estimate)	<u>Name Used To</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)
					Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>
					Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Birth Year and Place</i>	
Year of Birth (Do not include month and day.)	Place of Birth
1966	Regina, SASK, Canada

<i>Marital Status</i>					
Check All That Describe Your Current Situation:					
Never Married	Married	Separated	Annulled	Divorced	Widowed
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Spouse's Name (current spouse only)</i>			
<u>Spouse's First Name</u>	<u>Spouse's Middle Name</u>	<u>Spouse's Last Name</u>	<u>Spouse's Suffix</u>
Rencee	Ann	Fordyce	

<i>Spouse's Other Names Used (current spouse only)</i>						
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>	<u>Check if Maiden Name</u>	<u>Name Used From (Year)</u> (Check box if estimate)	<u>Name Used To (Month/Year)</u> (Check box if estimate)
Rencee	Ann	Amer		X	1970 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	July 1989 Est <input type="checkbox"/>
					Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Children's Names (if over 18)</i>			
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>
Ethan	Lynn	Fordyce	
Emma	Ruth	Fordyce	

2. Education

List all post-secondary schools attended.

<u>Name of School</u>	<u>Type of School</u> (vocational/technical/trade school, college/university/military college, correspondence/distance/extension/online school)	<u>Date Began School</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Ended School</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still in school)	<u>Degree</u>	<u>Date Awarded</u>
		Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		

3. Employment

(A) In reverse chronological order, list all of your employment activities, including unemployment and self-employment. If the employment activity was military duty, list separate employment activity periods to show each change of military duty station. Do not list employment before your 18th birthday unless to provide a minimum of two years of employment history.

<u>Type of Employment</u> (Active Military Duty Station, National Guard/Reserve, USPS Commissioned Corps, Other Federal employment, State Government (Non-Federal Employment), Self-employment, Unemployment, Federal Contractor, Non-Government Employment (excluding self-employment), Other)	<u>Name of Your Employer/Assigned Duty Station</u>	<u>Most Recent Position Title/Rank</u>	<u>Location</u> (City and State only)	<u>Date Employment Began</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Employment Ended</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still employed)
Non-Government Employee	Osborn Barr Paramore	Business Growth Director	St. Louis, MO	Feb 2021 <input type="checkbox"/> Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Federal Government	USDA	FSA Administrator	Washington, DC	March 2018 <input type="checkbox"/> Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Jan 2021 <input type="checkbox"/>
Federal Government	USDA	MO FSA SED	Columbia, MO	Nov 2017 <input type="checkbox"/> Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> March 2018 <input type="checkbox"/>
State Government	State of MO	Director of Agriculture	Jefferson City, MO	Oct 2013 <input type="checkbox"/> Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Jan 2017 <input type="checkbox"/>
Self Employed	Fordyce Farms	Owner/Operator	Bethany, MO	May 1983 <input type="checkbox"/> Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

(B) List any advisory, consultative, honorary or other part-time service or positions with federal, state, or local governments, not listed elsewhere.

<u>Name of Government Entity</u>	<u>Name of Position</u>	<u>Date Service Began</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Service Ended</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still serving)
MO DNR	Soil & Water Commission Member/Chairman	May 2005 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	May 2013 Est <input type="checkbox"/> Present <input type="checkbox"/>
South Harrison R-II School District	School Board Member	April 2007 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	April 2010 Est <input type="checkbox"/> Present <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Congressman G.T. Thompson's Ag Advisory Committee	Advisory Committee Member	2022 Est	Present
Congressman Sam Graves' Agriculture Advisory Committee	Advisory Board Member	2002 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Senator Jim Talent's Agriculture Advisory Committee	Advisory Committee Member	2002 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	2007 Est
Senator Kit Bond Policy Affairs Round Table	Member	1996 Est	1998 Est
Speaker of the House Catherine Hanaway's Ag Advisory Committee	Advisory Committee Member	2002 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	2005 Est
University of Missouri Research Farm at Spickard, Advisory Committee	Advisory Committee Member	1988 Est	1992 Est
Osborn Barr Agriculture Advisory Council	Chair	2017 Est	2022 Est

(C) List all positions held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, company, firm, partnership, or other for profit or nonprofit organization that is not otherwise listed in response to question 3(A).

<u>Name of Entity</u>	<u>Name of Position</u>	<u>Date Service Began</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Service Ended</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still serving)
Paseo-Cargill Biodiesel Plant (Joint Venture)	Director	May 2007 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

United Soybean Board	Director	July 2005	Est <input type="checkbox"/>	December 2016
American Farm Bureau	Director	Jan 1995	Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Jan 1996
North Central Area Vo-Tech School, Vo-Ag Advisory Board	Advisory Board Member	2004 Est		2010 Est
Green Hills Regional Planning Commission, Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation	Advisory Committee Member	2000 Est		2010 Est
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture	Member	2013 Est		2017 Est
Global Farmer Roundtable/The World Food Prize	Roundtable Member	2011 Est		2016 Est
National Biodiesel Board of Directors	Member, Board of Directors	2004 Est		2008 Est
Food Export Midwest	Chairman	2015 Est		2016 Est
Missouri Development Finance Board	Board Member	2013 Est		2017 Est
Missouri Agricultural & Small Business Development Authority Board	Board Member	2013 Est		2017 Est
Missouri Wine & Grape Board	Board Member	2013 Est		2017 Est
Community Foundation of NW Missouri	Foundation Member	2011 Est		2014 Est
Missouri Soybean Merchandizing Council	Chairman	2000 Est		2002 Est
Missouri Soybean Merchandizing Council	Secretary/Treasurer	1998 Est		2000 Est
Missouri Soybean Merchandizing Council	District 1 Board Member	1991 Est		2003 Est
MFA Oil Bulk Plant	Delegate	2000 Est		2003 Est

Missouri Farms Dairy (New Generation Cooperative)	Member	2001 Est	2008 Est
Missouri Food & Fiber (New Generation Cooperative)	Member	2000 Est	2012 Est
Missouri Value Processors	Chairman	2000 Est	2004 Est
North Central Region Soybean Research Program	Director	2000 Est	2003 Est
MFA Agri-Services	Delegate	1999 Est	2010 Est
Rural Community Development Foundation	Trustee	1995 Est	2000 Est
Missouri Agricultural Foundation Board	Member	2015 Est	2017 Est
Missouri State Fair Commission	Member	2013 Est	2017 Est
Missouri State Soil & Water Districts Commission	Member	1992 Est	2013 Est
Missouri Farm Bureau	Member	1990 Est	2001 Est
Northwest Missouri State Fair	Member	1985 Est	1999 Est
Beetlenut Enterprises (Co-op)	Member	2003 Est	2007 Est
First United Church of Bethany	Member	2005 Est	Present
Green Hills Planning Commission	Member	2000 Est	2002 Est
Sherman Township Board of Trustees	Member	1999 Est	20005 Est
George Wymore Farms Trust	Trustee	2008 Est	2014 Est
Harrison County University of Missouri Extension Council	Vice President/Treasurer	1992 Est	1998 Est

Missouri State Soil & Water Districts Commission	Chairman	2008 Est	2013 Est
Missouri State Soil & Water Districts Commission	Member	2005 Est	2013 Est
Missouri State Soil & Water Districts Commission	3rd Legislative District Committee, Chairman	1992 Est	2002 Est

(D) Please submit a copy of your resume with this questionnaire.

4. Honors and Awards

List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, civilian service citations, military medals, academic or professional honors, honorary society memberships and any other special recognition for outstanding service or achievement.

American Farmer Degree 1986; Honorary Alumni CAFNR Univ of MO 2003; Missouri Farm Family Award 2007; Soil Conservationist of the Year 2012; Honorary Chapter FFA Degree 2014; Honorary State FFA Degree 2015; President's Award/MO Corn Growers 2015; Alumni of the Year Agricultural Leaders of Tomorrow 2015; Distinguished Service Award MO Farm Bureau 2015; Honorary American Degree National FFA 2016; James C. Kirkpatrick Award/NWMO Press Association 2017; Brown Kimbrough Agricultural Leadership Award 2017.

5. Memberships

List all memberships that you have held in professional, social, business, fraternal, scholarly, civic, or charitable organizations in the last 10 years.

Unless relevant to your nomination, you do NOT need to include memberships in charitable organizations available to the public as a result of a tax deductible donation of \$1,000 or less, parent-teacher associations or other organizations connected to schools attended by your children, athletic clubs or teams, automobile support organizations (such as AAA), discounts clubs (such as Groupon or Sam's Club), or affinity memberships/consumer clubs (such as frequent flyer memberships).

<u>Name of Organization</u>	<u>Dates of Your Membership</u> (You may approximate.)	<u>Position(s) Held</u>
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Missouri Farm Bureau/American Farm Bureau	1983-Present	County President, MO YF&R Chair, AFBF YF&R Chair
Missouri Corn Growers/National Corn Growers Association	2007-Present	Member
Missouri Soybean Association/American Soybean Association	1995-Present	Member
Missouri Cattlemen's Association/National Cattlemen's Association	2013-Present	Member
Alpha Gamma Rho, Theta Chapter	2015-Present	Brother
Harrison County Republican Central Committee	1996-2008	Member
Harrison County Republican Central Committee	2005-2008	Vice-Chairman
Harrison County Farm Bureau Board	1993-2010	President
Harrison County Farm Bureau Board	1989-1993	Treasurer/Secretary
Harrison County Farm Bureau Board	1988-Present	Member

6. Political Activity

(A) Have you ever been a candidate for or been elected or appointed to a political office?

☒ Yes ☐ No (If yes, please complete the chart below)

<u>Name of Office</u>	<u>Elected/Appointed/ Candidate Only</u>	<u>Year(s) Election Held or Appointment Made</u>	<u>Term of Service (if applicable)</u>
MO House of Representatives	Candidate only	1997	
MO House of Representatives	Candidate only	1999	

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(B) List any offices held in or services rendered, including volunteer services, to a political party or election committee during the last 10 years that you have not listed elsewhere.

<u>Name of Party/Election Committee</u>	<u>Office/Services Rendered</u>	<u>Responsibilities</u>	<u>Dates of Service</u>
N/A			

(C) Itemize all individual political contributions of \$200 or more that you have made in the past five years to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity. Please list each individual contribution and not the total amount contributed to the person or entity during the year.

<u>Name of Recipient</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Year of Contribution</u>
Missouri Soybean Association Political Action Committee (MO SOYPAC)	\$440	2014
Missouri Corn Growers Association Federal PAC	\$350	2016
Missouri Soybean Association Political Action Committee (MO SOYPAC)	\$400	2016
Missouri Soybean Association Political Action Committee (MO SOYPAC)	\$500	2020
National Corn Growers Association PAC (CORNPAC)	\$885	2023
National Corn Growers Association PAC (CORNPAC)	\$460	2024

7. Publications and Speeches

(A) List the titles, publishers and dates of books, articles, reports or other published materials that you have written, including articles published on the Internet. Include a link to each publication when possible. If a link is not available, provide a digital copy of the publication via email if available. Please list all required publications even if no copy of the publication is available to provide.

<u>Title</u>	<u>Publisher</u>	<u>Date(s) of Publication</u>
Deep Trust Builds Strong Reputations	Osborn Barr Paramore	May 18, 2022
USDA COVID Food Assistance Program 2 applications open	Chicago Daily Herald, Ramsey News-Journal Edition	November 18, 2020
Observing National Agriculture Day, opinion	Bethany Republican-Clipper (Missouri)	March 21, 2018
Why opening trade with a post-Fidel Castro Cuba is good for Missouri	St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)	December 6, 2016

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(B) List any formal speeches or presentations you have delivered during the last 10 years relevant to the position to which you have been nominated, and all speeches/presentations you have delivered related to any topic for the last five years. Include any testimony to Congress or any other legislative or administrative body. Include a link to each speech when possible. If a link is not available, provide a digital copy of the publication via email if available. Please list all known required speeches even if no copy is available to provide.

<u>Title/Topic</u>	<u>Place/Audience</u>	<u>Date(s) of Speech</u>
Richard Fordyce Appointed USDA Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation	KRVN Video	1/21/2025
Four installments of AgSmarts social media campaign 1 , 2 , 3 , 4	Osborn Barr Paramore	8/15/2024, 8/23/2024, 9/9/2024, 9/24/2024
Our Monthly Conversation with Richard Fordyce- September 2023	Market Talk	10/2/2023
Friday, August 4th, 2023- Richard Fordyce	Market Talk	8/4/2023
Talking Policy, Weather and More with Richard Fordyce- June 2023	Market Talk	6/29/2023
Monthly Conversation on Agriculture with Richard Fordyce- May 2023	Market Talk	5/17/2023
36. The 2023 Farm Bill: A Panel Discussion at This Summer's Corn Congress	Nationalcorngrowers	7/21/2022 (Posted 5/8/2025)
Visit FSA Today to Enroll in ARC, PLC, and CRP	USDA	2/10/2020
Conservation and Forestry Hearing: To Review Implementation of Farm Bill Conservation Programs	House Committee on Agriculture	1/28/2020
Merry Christmas & Happy Holidays	Richard Fordyce	12/25/2016

A portion of the remarks by MO Department of Agriculture director, Richard Fordyce, at the Truman State University Farm.	Truman Ag	9/26/2016
My Farm, My Story: Director Richard Fordyce (video unavailable)	Missouri Department of Agriculture	3/16/2016
Show-Me Ag s13 e1304	PBS	11/19/2015
Director Richard Fordyce discusses Agriculture Building's new features	State of Missouri	8/18/2015
OBP Business Growth Director Richard Fordyce to Be Keynote Speaker	Paducah Sun	7/16/2021

8. Lobbying

In the past 10 years, have you registered as a lobbyist? If so, please indicate the state, federal, or local bodies with which you have registered (e.g., House, Senate, California Secretary of State). N/A

9. Digital Platforms

Please list all digital platforms (including social media and other digital content sites) on which you currently operate, or have formerly operated, an account, regardless of whether the account was held in your name or an alias. Include the full "alias" or "handle", including a link to each account if possible. Indicate whether the account is active, deleted, or dormant.

Facebook: [Fb.me/RichardFordyce32](https://www.facebook.com/RichardFordyce32)

Twitter: [@RichardFordyce1](https://twitter.com/RichardFordyce1)

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/richard-fordyce-69969938>

YouTube: *Ag RunDown with Richard Fordyce* <https://www.youtube.com/user/MoAgriculture>

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF
GOVERNMENT ETHICS



May 16, 2025

The Honorable John Boozman
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,
and Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In accordance with the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, I enclose a copy of the financial disclosure report filed by Richard Fordyce, who has been nominated by President Trump for the position of Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation, Department of Agriculture.

We have reviewed the report and have obtained advice from the agency concerning any possible conflict in light of its functions and the nominee's proposed duties. Also enclosed is an ethics agreement outlining the actions that the nominee will undertake to avoid conflicts of interest. Unless a date for compliance is indicated in the ethics agreement, the nominee must fully comply within three months of confirmation with any action specified in the ethics agreement.

Based thereon, we believe that this nominee is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest.

Sincerely,

DEBORAH
BORTOT

Deborah Bortot

Chief, Presidential Nominations Branch

Digitally signed by DEBORAH
BORTOT
Date: 2025.05.16 14:27:31
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Enclosures



May 12, 2025

Mr. Stuart Bender
Designated Agency Ethics Official
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Bender:

The purpose of this letter is to describe the steps that I will take to avoid any actual or apparent conflict of interest in the event that I am confirmed for the position of Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation, Department of Agriculture. It is my responsibility to understand and comply with commitments outlined in this agreement.

SECTION I – GENERAL COMMITMENTS

As required by the criminal conflicts of interest law at 18 U.S.C. § 208(a), I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter in which I know that I have a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the matter, or in which I know that a person whose interests are imputed to me has a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the particular matter, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1), or qualify for a regulatory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(2). I understand that the interests of the following persons are imputed to me:

- Any spouse or minor child of mine;
- Any general partner of a partnership in which I am a limited or general partner;
- Any organization in which I serve as an officer, director, trustee, general partner, or employee, even if uncompensated; and
- Any person or organization with which I am negotiating or have an arrangement concerning prospective employment.

In the event that an actual or potential conflict of interest arises during my appointment, I will consult with an agency ethics official and take the measures necessary to resolve the conflict, such as recusal from the particular matter or divestiture of an asset.

If I have a managed account or otherwise use the services of an investment professional during my appointment, I will direct the account manager or investment professional to obtain my prior approval on a case-by-case basis for the purchase of any assets other than cash, cash equivalents, investment funds that qualify for the regulatory exemption for diversified mutual funds and unit investment trusts at 5 C.F.R. § 2640.201(a), obligations of the United States, or municipal bonds.

I will receive a live ethics briefing from a member of the ethics office after my confirmation but not later than 15 days after my appointment pursuant to the ethics program regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 2638.305. Within 90 days of my confirmation, I will submit my Certification of Ethics Agreement Compliance which documents my compliance with this ethics agreement.

I will not modify this ethics agreement without your approval and the approval of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics pursuant to the ethics agreement requirements contained in the financial disclosure regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 2634.803(a)(4).

SECTION 2 – OSBORNE & BARR COMMUNICATIONS

Upon confirmation, I will resign from my position with Osborne & Barr Communications, Inc. Pursuant to the impartiality regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502, for a period of one year after my resignation from this entity, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter involving specific parties in which I know that this entity is a party or represents a party, unless I am first authorized to participate, pursuant to 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502(d).

SECTION 3 – FORDYCE FARMS

My spouse and I own Fordyce Farms, an unincorporated farming entity in Harrison County, Missouri, which operates on land that it owns and land that it leases. Fordyce Farms participates in the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and receives annual payments through this USDA program. Fordyce Farms also participates in the USDA Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs and could receive annual payments through these USDA programs. These programs are administered by USDA through the Commodity Credit Corporation in which I will serve as an officer and member of the Board. We also currently have insurance policies under the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA).

Prior to assuming the duties of my office, I will transfer 100% of the business operations of Fordyce Farms, including assigning any contractual rights or responsibilities associated with Fordyce Farms and any leases for farmland, to a newly established limited liability company. Before I assume the duties of my office, I will transfer ownership of the limited liability company to my adult non-dependent children. I will not hold a position with this entity and will not provide services material to the production of income. I will continue to own the real property currently used by Fordyce Farms, which will be leased to the newly established limited liability company on a fixed-cash basis. I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on the ability or willingness of the LLC to make the rent payments to me, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1).

I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on my financial interest in the farmland, unless I first obtain a written waiver pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1), or qualify for a regulatory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(2). Finally, in the event of a disaster in Harrison County, Missouri, I will not participate in any way in a decision as to whether to designate Harrison County as entitled to disaster relief.

SECTION 4 – PASEO-CARGILL ENERGY JOINT VENTURE

Upon confirmation, I will resign from my position with the Paseo-Cargill Energy Joint Venture. Pursuant to the impartiality regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502, for a period of one year

after my resignation, I also will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter involving specific parties in which I know Paseo-Cargill Energy Joint Venture, is a party or represents a party, unless I am first authorized to participate, pursuant to 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502(d). I will divest my interests in Paseo Biofuels, LLC., as soon as practicable but not later than 90 days after my confirmation. I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests of this entity until I have divested it, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1), or qualify for a regulatory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(2). I have verified that I will be able to carry out the divestiture within the timeframe described above.

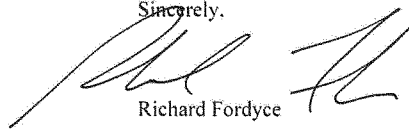
SECTION 5 – UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

I resigned from my position with the University of Missouri, College of Agriculture in December 2024. Pursuant to the impartiality regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502, for a period of one year after my resignation from this entity, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter involving specific parties in which I know that this entity is a party or represents a party, unless I am first authorized to participate, pursuant to 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502(d).

SECTION 6 - PUBLIC POSTING

I have been advised that this ethics agreement and the Certification of Ethics Agreement Compliance will be posted publicly, consistent with the public information law at 5 U.S.C. § 552, on the website of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics with ethics agreements of other Presidential nominees who file public financial disclosure reports.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Fordyce', is written over a horizontal line.

Richard Fordyce

Report Type: Nominee Report
Year (Annual Report only):
Date of Appointment:
Date of Termination:

Executive Branch Personnel
Public Financial Disclosure Report (OGE Form 278e)

Filer's Information

Fordyce, Richard

Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation, Department of Agriculture

Other Federal Government Positions Held During the Preceding 12 Months:
None

Names of Congressional Committees Considering Nomination:

- Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

Electronic Signature - I certify that the statements I have made in this form are true, complete and correct to the best of my knowledge.

/s/ Fordyce, Richard [electronically signed on 02/07/2025 by Fordyce, Richard in Integrity.gov]

Agency Ethics Official's Opinion - On the basis of information contained in this report, I conclude that the filer is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations (subject to any comments below).

/s/ Tobin, Andrew, Certifying Official [electronically signed on 05/14/2025 by Tobin, Andrew in Integrity.gov]

Other review conducted by

U.S. Office of Government Ethics Certification
/s/ Bortot, Deborah, Certifying Official [electronically signed on 05/16/2025 by Bortot, Deborah in Integrity.gov]

1. Filer's Positions Held Outside United States Government

#	ORGANIZATION NAME	CITY, STATE	ORGANIZATION TYPE	POSITION HELD	FROM	TO
1	Osborn & Barr Communications, Inc.	St. Louis, Missouri	Communications /PR/Marketing	Business Growth Director, Agriculture	2/2021	Present
2	Fordyce Farms	Bethany, Missouri	Farm (Unincorporated)	Owner/Operator	5/1983	Present
3	Paseo-Cargill Energy Joint Venture	See Endnote	Biodiesel Plant	Director	5/2007	Present
4	University of Missouri, College of Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources	Columbia, Missouri	University/College	Director	12/2014	12/2024

2. Filer's Employment Assets & Income and Retirement Accounts

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
1	Osborn & Barr Communications, Inc.	N/A		Salary/Bonus	\$271,682
2	Fordyce Farms, Bethany, Missouri (Unincorporated Farm: Cattle, Corn, Soybeans, and Wheat)	N/A	\$1,000,001 - \$5,000,000	Gross farming income	\$591,400
3	Osborn & Barr Communications 401(k)	No			
3.1	Principal LifeTime Hybrid 2030 Fund Institutional Class Shares (PHTNX)	Yes	\$100,001 - \$250,000		None (or less than \$201)
4	State of Missouri 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan	No			
4.1	Missouri 2030 Fund	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
5	Missouri State Employees' Retirement System (unvested)	See Endnote	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
6	Paseo Biofuels, LLC	See Endnote	\$1,001 - \$15,000	Dividends	\$2,501 - \$5,000
7	USDA Conservation Reserve Program	N/A		Annual program payment	\$1,244

3. Filer's Employment Agreements and Arrangements

#	EMPLOYER OR PARTY	CITY, STATE	STATUS AND TERMS	DATE
1	State of Missouri 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan	Jefferson City, Missouri	I will continue to participate in this defined contribution plan, but the plan sponsor no longer makes contributions.	4/2017
2	Osborn & Barr Communications, Inc. 401(k)	St. Louis, Missouri	I will continue to participate in this defined contribution plan, but the plan sponsor will cease making contributions upon my separation	2/2021
3	Missouri State Employees' Retirement System	Jefferson City, Missouri	I will continue to participate in this defined benefit plan.	1/2013

4. Filer's Sources of Compensation Exceeding \$5,000 in a Year

#	SOURCE NAME	CITY, STATE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES
1	Fordyce Farms (Unincorporated Farm)	Bethany, Missouri	Services as Owner/Operator
2	Osborn & Barr Communications, Inc.	St. Louis, Missouri	Services as Business Growth Director, Agriculture

5. Spouse's Employment Assets & Income and Retirement Accounts

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
1	Cameron Regional Medical Center-Employer (Nursing)	N/A		salary and bonus	

6. Other Assets and Income

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
1	U.S. bank account (cash) #1	N/A	\$15,001 - \$50,000	Interest	\$201 - \$1,000
2	Missouri Farm Bureau (whole life insurance)	N/A	\$15,001 - \$50,000		None (or less than \$201)
3	Missouri Farm Bureau (whole life insurance) #2	N/A	\$50,001 - \$100,000		None (or less than \$201)

7. Transactions

(N/A) - Not required for this type of report

8. Liabilities

#	CREDITOR NAME	TYPE	AMOUNT	YEAR INCURRED	RATE	TERM
1	Farmers Bank	Revolving Line of Credit	\$250,001 - \$500,000	2024	8.5%	Revolving

#	CREDITOR NAME	TYPE	AMOUNT	YEAR INCURRED	RATE	TERM
2	U.S. Small Business Administration	Economic Industry Disaster Loan	\$50,001 - \$100,000	2020	3.75%	30 years

9. Gifts and Travel Reimbursements

(N/A) - Not required for this type of report

Endnotes

PART	#	ENDNOTE
1.	3	Paseo Biofuels is joint venture with Cargill and 600 Missouri farmer members who own a biodiesel production facility and glycerin refinery in Kansas City, Missouri.
2.	5	This value reflects my accumulated balance in the Missouri State Employees' Retirement System.
2.	6	Paseo Biofuels is joint venture with Cargill and 600 Missouri farmer members who own a biodiesel production facility and glycerin refinery in Kansas City, Missouri.

Summary of Contents

1. Filer's Positions Held Outside United States Government

Part 1 discloses positions that the filer held at any time during the reporting period (excluding positions with the United States Government). Positions are reportable even if the filer did not receive compensation.

This section does not include the following: (1) positions with religious, social, fraternal, or political organizations; (2) positions solely of an honorary nature; (3) positions held as part of the filer's official duties with the United States Government; (4) mere membership in an organization; and (5) passive investment interests as a limited partner or non-managing member of a limited liability company.

2. Filer's Employment Assets & Income and Retirement Accounts

Part 2 discloses the following:

- Sources of earned and other non-investment income of the filer totaling more than \$200 during the reporting period (e.g., salary, fees, partnership share, honoraria, scholarships, and prizes)
- Assets related to the filer's business, employment, or other income-generating activities (1) that ended the reporting period with a value greater than \$1,000 or (2) from which more than \$200 in income was received during the reporting period (e.g., equity in business or partnership, stock options, retirement plans/accounts and their underlying holdings as appropriate, deferred compensation, and intellectual property, such as book deals and patents)

This section does not include assets or income from United States Government employment or assets that were acquired separately from the filer's business, employment, or other income-generating activities (e.g., assets purchased through a brokerage account). Note: The type of income is not required if the amount of income is \$0 - \$200 or if the asset qualifies as an excepted investment fund (EIF).

3. Filer's Employment Agreements and Arrangements

Part 3 discloses agreements or arrangements that the filer had during the reporting period with an employer or former employer (except the United States Government), such as the following:

- Future employment
- Leave of absence
- Continuing payments from an employer, including severance and payments not yet received for previous work (excluding ordinary salary from a current employer)
- Continuing participation in an employee welfare, retirement, or other benefit plan, such as pensions or a deferred compensation plan
- Retention or disposition of employer-awarded equity, sharing in profits or carried interests (e.g., vested and unvested stock options, restricted stock, future share of a company's profits, etc.)

4. Filer's Sources of Compensation Exceeding \$5,000 in a Year

Part 4 discloses sources (except the United States Government) that paid more than \$5,000 in a calendar year for the filer's services during any year of the reporting period.

The filer discloses payments both from employers and from any clients to whom the filer personally provided services. The filer discloses a source even if the source made its payment to the filer's employer and not to the filer. The filer does not disclose a client's payment to the filer's employer if the filer did not provide the services for which the client is paying.

5. Spouse's Employment Assets & Income and Retirement Accounts

Part 5 discloses the following:

- Sources of earned income (excluding honoraria) for the filer's spouse totaling more than \$1,000 during the reporting period (e.g., salary, consulting fees, and partnership share)
- Sources of honoraria for the filer's spouse greater than \$200 during the reporting period
- Assets related to the filer's spouse's employment, business activities, other income-generating activities (1) that ended the reporting period with a value greater than \$1,000 or (2) from which more than \$200 in income was received during the reporting period (e.g., equity in business or partnership, stock options, retirement plans/accounts and their underlying holdings as appropriate, deferred compensation, and intellectual property, such as book deals and patents)

This section does not include assets or income from United States Government employment or assets that were acquired separately from the filer's spouse's business, employment, or other income-generating activities (e.g., assets purchased through a brokerage account). Note: The type of income is not required if the amount of income is \$0 - \$200 or if the asset qualifies as an excepted investment fund (EIF). Amounts of income are not required for a spouse's earned income (excluding honoraria).

6. Other Assets and Income

Part 6 discloses each asset, not already reported, (1) that ended the reporting period with a value greater than \$1,000 or (2) from which more than \$200 in investment income was received during the reporting period. For purposes of the value and income thresholds, the filer aggregates the filer's interests with those of the filer's spouse and dependent children.

This section does not include the following types of assets: (1) a personal residence (unless it was rented out during the reporting period); (2) income or retirement benefits associated with United States Government employment (e.g., Thrift Savings Plan); and (3) cash accounts (e.g., checking, savings, money market accounts) at a single financial institution with a value of \$5,000 or less (unless more than \$200 in income was received). Additional exceptions apply. Note: The type of income is not required if the amount of income is \$0 - \$200 or if the asset qualifies as an excepted investment fund (EIF).

7. Transactions

Part 7 discloses purchases, sales, or exchanges of real property or securities in excess of \$1,000 made on behalf of the filer, the filer's spouse or dependent child during the reporting period.

This section does not include transactions that concern the following: (1) a personal residence, unless rented out; (2) cash accounts (e.g., checking, savings, CDs, money market accounts) and money market mutual funds; (3) Treasury bills, bonds, and notes; and (4) holdings within a federal Thrift Savings Plan account. Additional exceptions apply.

8. Liabilities

Part 8 discloses liabilities over \$10,000 that the filer, the filer's spouse or dependent child owed at any time during the reporting period.

This section does not include the following types of liabilities: (1) mortgages on a personal residence, unless rented out (note: certain PAS nominees and appointees are required to report all mortgages); (2) loans secured by a personal motor vehicle, household furniture, or appliances, unless the loan exceeds the item's purchase price; and (3) revolving charge accounts, such as credit card balances, if the outstanding liability did not exceed \$10,000 at the end of the reporting period. Additional exceptions apply.

9. Gifts and Travel Reimbursements

This section discloses:

- Gifts totaling more than \$480 that the filer, the filer's spouse, and dependent children received from any one source during the reporting period.
- Travel reimbursements totaling more than \$480 that the filer, the filer's spouse, and dependent children received from any one source during the reporting period.

For purposes of this section, the filer need not aggregate any gift or travel reimbursement with a value of \$192 or less. Regardless of the value, this section does not include the following items: (1) anything received from relatives; (2) anything received from the United States Government or from the District of Columbia, state, or local governments; (3) bequests and other forms of inheritance; (4) gifts and travel reimbursements given to the filer's agency in connection with the filer's official travel; (5) gifts of hospitality (food, lodging, entertainment) at the donor's residence or personal premises; and (6) anything received by the filer's spouse or dependent children totally independent of their relationship to the filer. Additional exceptions apply.

Privacy Act Statement

5 U.S.C. § 13101 et seq., and 5 C.F.R. Part 2634 of the U. S. Office of Government Ethics regulations require the reporting of this information. Failure to provide the requested information may result in separation, disciplinary action, or civil action. The primary use of the information on this report is for review by Government officials to determine compliance with applicable Federal laws and regulations. This report may also be disclosed upon request to any requesting person in accordance with 5 U.S.C. §§ 13107 and § 13122(b)(1) or as otherwise authorized by law. You may inspect applications for public access of your own form upon request. Additional disclosures of the information on this report may be made: (1) to any requesting person, subject to the limitation contained in section 208(d)(1) of title 18, any determination granting an exemption pursuant to sections 208(b)(1) and 208(b)(3) of title 18; (2) to a Federal, State, or local law enforcement agency if the disclosing agency becomes aware of violations or potential violations of law or regulation; (3) to a source when necessary to obtain information relevant to a conflict of interest investigation or determination; (4) to the National Archives and Records Administration or the General Services Administration in records management inspections; (5) to the Office of Management and Budget during legislative coordination on private relief legislation; (6) when the disclosing agency determines that the records are arguably relevant to a proceeding before a court, grand jury, or administrative or adjudicative body, or in a proceeding before an administrative or adjudicative body when the adjudicator determines the records to be relevant to the proceeding; (7) to reviewing officials in a new office, department or agency when an employee transfers or is detailed from one covered position to another, a public financial disclosure report and any accompanying documents, including statements notifying an employee's supervising ethics office of the commencement of negotiations for future employment or compensation or of an agreement for future employment or compensation; (8) to a Member of Congress or a congressional office in response to an inquiry made on behalf of and at the request of an individual who is the subject of the record; (9) to contractors and other non-Government employees working on a contract, service or assignment for the Federal Government when necessary to accomplish a function related to this system of records; (10) on the OGE Website and to any person, department or agency, any written ethics agreement, including certifications of ethics agreement compliance, filed with OGE by an individual nominated by the President to a position requiring Senate confirmation; (11) on the OGE Website and to any person, department or agency, any certificate of divestiture issued by OGE; (12) on the OGE Website and to any person, department or agency, any waiver of the restrictions contained in Executive Order 13989 or any superseding executive order; (13) to appropriate agencies, entities and persons when there has been a suspected or confirmed breach of the system of records, the agency maintaining the records has determined that there is a risk of harm to individuals, the agency, the Federal Government, or national security, and the disclosure is reasonably necessary to assist in connection with the agency's efforts to respond to the suspected or confirmed breach or to prevent, minimize, or remedy such harm; and (14) to another Federal agency or Federal entity, when the agency maintaining the record determines that information from this system of records is reasonably necessary to assist the recipient agency or entity in responding to a suspected or confirmed breach or in preventing, minimizing, or remedying the risk of harm to individuals, the recipient agency or entity, the Federal Government, or national security. See also the OGE/GOVT-1 executive branch-wide Privacy Act system of records.

Public Burden Information

This collection of information is estimated to take an average of ten hours per response, including time for reviewing the instructions, gathering the data needed, and completing the form. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the Program Counsel, U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE) 250 E Street, S.W., Suite 750, Washington, DC 20024-3249.

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July 21, 2025

The Honorable John Boozman, Chairman Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

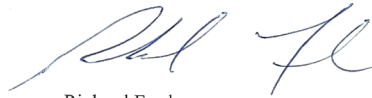
The Honorable Amy Klobuchar, Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Boozman and Ranking Member Klobuchar:

The Ethics in Government Act of 1978 (the Act), as amended, provides that Presidential nominees for a position requiring the advice and consent of the Senate shall provide any necessary updates to their public financial disclosure report with respect to any outside earned income and honoraria received through the period ending no more than five days prior to the commencement of the Senate hearing of their nomination. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 13103(b)(1) and 5 C.F.R. § 2634.606(a).

Please be advised that I have informed the appropriate ethics officials that the information required by section 102(a)(1)(A) of the Act with respect to income and honoraria contained in OGE Form 278e (Executive Branch Public Financial Disclosure Report) executed by me on February 7, 2025, is current as of July 21, 2025. This date is within five days prior to the date of the hearing scheduled to consider my nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Richard Fordyce', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Richard Fordyce

cc: Stuart Bender, Designated Agency Ethics Official and Director, USDA Office of Ethics

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

JULY 23, 2025

U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
Nomination Hearing
July 23, 2025
Questions for the Record
Mr. Richard Fordyce

Senator Amy Klobuchar

1. Responsiveness to Congress

If you are confirmed, do you agree to:

- a. Promptly reply to any request for information from members of this Committee or any duly constituted committee of Congress and provide the requested information?

To the maximum extent practicable, yes.

- b. Promptly respond to requests for data and technical assistance in informing or drafting legislation or implementation of the law?

To the maximum extent practicable, yes.

- c. Notify the Chair and Ranking Member of this Committee in advance of any major changes made by you or within the Department of Agriculture during your tenure?

To the maximum extent practicable, yes.

2. Oversight

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Inspectors General play a critical role in providing oversight of the executive branch, regardless of administration. Will you commit to responding promptly and thoroughly to GAO and the Inspector General on all oversight requests?

To the maximum extent practicable, yes.

3. Disaster Aid Implementation

Earlier this month, Secretary Rollins announced that \$16 billion from the American Relief Act will be rolled out for crop losses through the Supplemental Disaster Relief Program. Together with many of my colleagues, I called for the approach adopted by the Secretary, streamlining assistance with pre-filled applications, and I appreciate the work undertaken so far. We understand that the second stage of crop assistance is still in

development for farmers that didn't have insurance or had an otherwise uncovered loss. Will you commit to working to ensure that producers with limited risk management options will be adequately eligible for assistance?

If confirmed, I will work to ensure FPAC programs work for all farmers to the maximum extent practicable.

4. Partnership Programs

Public-private partnership programs, like RCPP, are a valuable tool for leveraging non-federal funding and expertise for helping farmers and ranchers adopt conservation practices.

Unfortunately, RCPP projects in my state and others were recently cancelled. I, Senator Bennet, and other Committee members are still waiting for information about these cancellations. This follows other conservation partnership projects having been terminated by the USDA earlier this year.

- a. How do you think public-private partnerships can assist the USDA in delivering conservation assistance to farmers?

Public-private partnerships provide producers with additional resources and financial support.

- b. As a farmer, would you find it helpful to have experts like wildlife biologists from conservation organizations there to assist you in addition to USDA staff?

It would depend on the intent and focus of the project.

Senator Joni Ernst

1. Mr. Fordyce, the 45Z Clean Fuel Production Credit is intended to drive investment in American-made renewable fuels and strengthen the entire biofuels supply chain—starting with our farmers. That's why I fought to extend this critical credit in the One Big Beautiful Bill, alongside reforms to ensure it delivers real value to U.S. producers. Most importantly, I helped secure a key provision to ensure eligible feedstocks actually support American farmers—not foreign imports like Chinese used cooking oil or Brazilian tallow. Biofuels are essential to America's energy dominance, and 45Z is a tool to help us get there. In anticipation to participate, Iowa farmers are already adopting conservation and nutrient management practices that not only improve their operations but enhance the value of their crops.

- a. Mr. Fordyce, given your role overseeing both conservation and farm production, do you support giving farmers credit for these on-farm practices through 45Z?

If confirmed, I look forward to implementing One Big Beautiful Bill provisions in the purview of the Farm Production and Conservation Mission Area.

- b. Mr. Fordyce, will you commit to pushing for a transparent, science-based approach—in coordination with Treasury, EPA, and DOE—to ensure these practices are accurately measured and rewarded in the clean fuel lifecycle analysis?

I commit to working with all relevant agencies to implement the provisions of the One Big Beautiful Bill.

Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith

- 1. One of the many things accomplished in the One Big Beautiful Bill that I am very proud of is the improvements we made to the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish program, otherwise known as E-LAP. This program is meant to support producers who suffer losses not covered by other disaster programs. However, catfish producers in my state of Mississippi struggle to use the program particularly when it comes to bird depredation by protected species like cormorants and herons. Bird depredation can wipe out entire ponds of fish, resulting in severe economic losses that can put producers out of business and create a loss of workforce in very rural areas of the country. Through the reconciliation process and after years of working on this issue, Congress is making producers of farm-raised fish experiencing losses associated with bird depredation eligible for E-LAP. While this is a major win in helping our producers deal with this critical issue, it's crucial that USDA implement this reform with clear, accessible, and producer-friendly guidance. I standby ready to assist you in any way possible.

- a. What commitments will you make to implement this reform in a way that is practical and accessible so that producers can receive meaningful relief when they're experiencing losses?

If confirmed, I will work to ensure these provisions are implemented in compliance with the law.

- b. Will you work with farm-raised fish producers, as well as USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Agricultural Research Service (ARS) – which are both very familiar with bird depredation on southern catfish ponds – to ensure we get the new E-LAP regulations right?

If confirmed, I will work with all relevant portions of the Department to ensure these provisions are implemented in compliance with the law.

Senator Deb Fischer**1. Annual Acreage Reporting:**

To try to lessen the reporting burdens on farmers and FSA staff, previous Farm Bills included the Acreage Crop Reporting Streamlining Initiative to encourage the modernization of reporting systems. One example of an opportunity for USDA is to streamline the electronic acreage reporting to FSA, so farmers do not have to continue to hand draw fields and instead submit field data electronically. This could also help free up time for local FSA offices who are often overburdened and under staffed.

- a. Can you share from your previous tenure as FSA Administrator, what are the obstacles to implementing electronic acreage reporting?

Because I am not at the Department, I am not able to ascertain the current obstacles to the modernization of acreage reporting. However, if I am confirmed, it will be a top priority.

- b. If you are confirmed, do you plan to improve the system in house or with approved third-party providers?

Farmers are innovators who have adopted technology capable of improving this process. If confirmed, I will work with FSA staff and private entities to identify the best path forward.

2. Precision Agriculture

I recently reintroduced my Precision Ag Package that includes three bills to expand adoption of precision agriculture: the PRECISE Act, the Precision Agriculture Loan Act and the Last Acre Act. These bills aim to help finance precision agriculture, ensure existing conservation programs incorporate precision agriculture, and ensure there is the connectivity required to take full advantage of the technologies. Two of my bills focus on how we can use existing conservation programs - EQIP, CSP, the Conservation Loan Program - to help producers adopt precision ag practices on their operations. Do you commit to working with the committee on how we can improve existing programs to incorporate these technologies?

If confirmed, I commit to working with all Members on their technical assistance request to the maximum extent practicable.

3. Voluntary Base Acre Update

Within the One Big Beautiful Bill, it implements a one-time voluntary base acre update for farmers who do not have any base acres or their average planted/acres prevented from being planted exceed their current base amount. If confirmed, how do you plan to implement the voluntary base acre update?

If confirmed, I will work to ensure these provisions are implemented in compliance with the law.

Senator Michael Bennet

1. What steps can we take to improve crop insurance options in large western counties like those in Colorado, where county-level data often masks local losses and fails to reflect producers' actual risk?

Once confirmed, I look forward to working with RMA and relevant stakeholders to evaluate options to strengthen farm safety net for all producers.

2. For decades, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has been a vital part of the farm safety net for farmers and ranchers in Colorado. This voluntary, incentive-based conservation program reduces soil erosion, improves water quality, creates wildlife habitat, and ensures that land remains productive in the long term. In Colorado, nearly 3 million acres are enrolled, but farmers and ranchers have recently faced lower rental rates and reduced incentives on marginal and highly erodible lands, making it harder to participate while maintaining financial stability.

- a. Under your leadership at FPAC, how will you ensure CRP remains a viable tool for producers to safeguard their operations and generate on-farm revenue?

Because I am not at the Department, I am not aware of the details regarding changes in CRP rental rates. If confirmed, I will follow the law as prescribed in the Farm Bill.

- b. Will you commit to removing unnecessary administrative barriers to participation in CRP and other conservation programs?

If confirmed, I will follow the law as prescribed in the Farm Bill.

3. In this position, you will oversee three important agencies—NRCS, FSA, and RMA. The work of each of these agencies must complement, rather than conflict with, the others. For example, FSA's Conservation Reserve Program and NRCS's Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) both play critical roles in supporting voluntary, incentive-based

conservation. Can you commit to ensuring that FSA and NRCS work together to effectively and efficiently administer their programs and initiatives, including WLFW?

If confirmed, I commit to ensuring FSA and NRCS work together to ensure farmers can efficiently access the programs each agency delivers.

Senator Tina Smith

1. Our rural communities are confronting profound change. More than a third of farm and ranch land in the United States is expected to change hands in the next 20 years. The average age of a farmer in this country is approaching 60. Without new farmers taking over and building new agricultural businesses, we will lose farmland that is essential to our rural communities.

You and I share the belief that we need to ensure that our next generation of farmers have the tools to succeed. To achieve this, I introduced a bill earlier this year, the New Producer Economic Security Act, to help beginning farmers access land, capital, and markets -- critical components to starting a farm.

This bill is based off an existing FSA program that was designed to support beginning farmers. However, in June, through a press release, Secretary Rollins abruptly canceled funding for this FSA beginning farmer program with little explanation as to who will be impacted.

I, along with many of my colleagues on this Committee, sent a letter to Secretary Rollins asking for details as to why these programs were canceled and where the cancellations are located.

I realize that you didn't have a hand in the decision to halt funding for these beginning farmer programs. However, don't you think cancelling these funds for beginning farmers is contradictory to our shared goal of supporting our next generation of farmers?

Because I am not at the Department, I am not aware of the details of this question. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting beginning farmers and ensuring the next generation of farmers have access to the programs they need to the maximum extent practical.

2. Over the past several years in Minnesota, we have experienced both severe flooding and drought that have disrupted the work of farmers and ranchers. Small producers growing a variety of produce crops have especially been hit hard by this severe weather. Yet, many farmers, especially farmers growing specialty crops like fruits and vegetables, do not have access to the farm safety net. The Whole-Farm Revenue Protection option is an insurance policy designed to protect these farmers by insuring a farmer's entire operation, not just one crop. Making sure that this program works as best as possible is a priority for

me, and I am working on a bill to further improve the Whole Farm Revenue Protection Program.

- a. As a farmer, can you help explain how crop insurance coverage allows farmers to mitigate the impacts of severe weather events?

Crop insurance and the Noninsured Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), in addition to Whole-Farm Revenue Protection, are essential risk mitigation tools for farmers.

- b. What is the impact of a lack of crop insurance coverage for specialty crop producers who do not have access to traditional crop insurance?

If confirmed, I commit to working with you to enhance crop insurance options for specialty crop growers.

Senator Richard Durbin

1. There have been several dangerous black-out dust storms in Illinois that have created zero visibility on roads and highways, and have been tied to agricultural practices. A storm in May 2023 on Interstate 55 in Illinois resulted in a 72-vehicle pile-up that took the lives of eight people. The University of Illinois recently completed a USDA-funded study that concluded a lack of ground cover on bare dirt in agricultural fields was a factor. Other analyses have documented the low percentage of funds that USDA allocates to Illinois agriculture to expand conservation practices.

Illinois ranks fourth in planted cropland, but has ranked as low as 37th nationally in funds allocated by USDA that are designed to help farmers to integrate conservation practices directly into production agriculture, such as incentives to help farmers adopt cover crops, conservation tillage, and fertilizer reduction—programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). A large percentage of applications submitted by Illinois farmers to USDA for conservation assistance have gone unfunded. Yet all of the Midwestern states contiguous to Illinois, except Iowa, receive a higher national percentage allocation from USDA for conservation funds intended for production agriculture, despite those states having less planted acres than Illinois. Further, many southern states also receive a higher allocation from USDA in conservation dollars, when those states have two-to-three times less planted acres than Illinois.

Last fall, I led an Illinois Congressional Delegation letter requesting USDA to double or triple the percentage of national conservation funds allocated to Illinois. There was not a strong commitment from USDA. Mr. Fordyce, I know you have a strong background in conservation.

If confirmed, will you commit to working with me to significantly increase the national percentage of conservation dollars that USDA allocates to the Illinois Natural Resources Conservation Service so that it actually matches the ranking of Illinois as a top agricultural state for planted acres?

If confirmed, I will work to ensure Illinois farmers have the resources they need to the maximum extent practicable.

2. USDA is required to maintain actuarial soundness of the Federal Crop Insurance Program. The premiums paid, and indemnity payments issued, should be about equal over time. According to the University of Illinois, Illinois farmers continually have had low crop losses compared to the rest of the country. In fact, over the past 10 years, Illinois farmers have perhaps the lowest loss ratios in the nation. Low losses also exist for crops grown in counties in Midwestern states like Indiana, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan Nebraska, Kansas, South Dakota, North Dakota, Indiana, and Ohio.

But there are counties in states like Arkansas, Mississippi, and Texas, where the data shows ongoing crop losses and crop insurance claims that routinely exceed the premiums paid by those farmers—in some counties, six to 10 years of losses in a row. In other words, the government continues to subsidize federal crop insurance premiums for farmers in the south who repeatedly experience continuous losses year after year after year.

With conventional insurance, we are seeing companies pull out of states like Florida due to constant hurricane damage, or California due to the wildfires. But USDA continues to allow crop insurance in regions that continue to have losses, while farmers continue to pay premiums that do not always reflect their status as a high-loss or low-loss state.

Do you believe the federal crop insurance program should be updated so that premium rates more accurately align with the actual crop loss risks of the farmer?

If confirmed, I can commit to working to maintain crop insurance's actuarial soundness so the program can remain a cost-effective risk management tool for all farmers to the maximum extent practicable.

3. Significant attention has been paid to payment error rates in nutrition programs, such as SNAP, during the recent budget reconciliation process. However, programs administered by the FPAC mission area also have had troubling error rates under both Democratic and Republican Administrations. For example, during your time in the first Trump Administration, the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program had improper payment rates of nearly 30 percent in Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 and over 50 percent in FY 2020.

- a. Do you believe that payment error rates in farm programs should be addressed?

If confirmed, I will work to ensure all FPAC programs are a responsible use of taxpayer dollars.

- b. If confirmed, what steps will you take to minimize improper payment rates in programs under the FPAC mission area?

If confirmed, I will work to ensure all FPAC programs are a responsible use of taxpayer dollars.

- 4. During Secretary Rollins' work with her America First Policy Institute, she expressed support for conducting "the largest deportation exercise in history" at a "scale that actually matters." I hear from pork producers, meat packers, apple orchards, and dairy operations that they cannot find local workers. They use foreign workers who are legally here, who have temporary visas, or visas, like those authorized by the U.S. Mexico Canada Trade Agreement, and other official authorizations approved by the U.S. government.

- a. As I asked then-nominee Rollins before this committee—if the focus is on "criminals first," what can you advise farmers to expect for second focus and third focus?

I am not positioned to comment on policy matters outside of the jurisdiction of the FPAC Mission Area.

- b. Should farmers continue to expect federal agents to appear unannounced to search their private property for foreign workers?

I am not positioned to comment on policy matters outside of the jurisdiction of the FPAC Mission Area.

- c. With about 2,124 USDA FSA offices in almost every rural county in the United States, should farmers anticipate that FSA County Office staff will be instructed to inform on farmers in their service area who are believed to be employing foreign workers?

I am not positioned to comment on policy matters outside of the jurisdiction of the FPAC Mission Area.

- 5. Last fall, the national corn and soybean groups published a major report that warned a tariff war risks long-lasting permanent U.S. market loss to competitors like Brazil and Argentina, who will gain on all fronts, compared to U.S. farmers—outweighing any short-term relief payments issued by USDA.

When you were administrator of the Farm Service Agency (FSA) during the first Trump Administration, USDA offered \$28 billion in trade relief payments, known as Market Facilitation Program (MFP), to American farmers who suffered due to President Trump's trade war. But there seemed to be political decisions on how these payments were allocated across the country.

Soybean growers experienced a 75 percent drop in sales to China—a \$9 billion loss—compared to just a 6 percent drop—or \$54 million loss—in China’s imports of U.S. cotton. Soybean prices dropped to 10-year lows. USDA trade aid to Illinois farmers averaged \$69 per acre. But aid averaged \$75 per acre in Georgia; \$87 per acre in Mississippi; and \$94 per acre in Alabama. In fact, payments in 35 Alabama and Mississippi counties far exceeded the highest Illinois payment, with some cotton growers receiving \$150 per acre, double the Illinois average.

Yet Illinois has twice the number of soybean growers than all of the cotton growers in the U.S. But payments overcompensated Southern cotton farmers, whose market losses to China were far less than what Midwestern soybean farmers faced.

- a. Do you plan to use USDA authorities to give trade relief to farmers?

Secretary Rollins has publicly stated she stands ready to support farmers. Since I am not in the Department, I am not able to provide further insight. If confirmed I stand ready to support the Secretary.

- b. Soybean growers were shortchanged by USDA the last time—can they expect USDA to repeat these formulas?

If confirmed, I will work ensure FPAC programs work for all farmers to the maximum extent practicable.

Senator Raphael Warnock

1. On July 24, 2025, Secretary Rollins announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) would undergo a structural reorganization as part of the agency’s “process of reducing its workforce.”¹ According to the announcement, USDA has already lost at least 15,364 employees across its mission areas.

- a. If confirmed, how will you ensure that any changes to USDA’s structure or staffing do not impede the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s (NRCS) ability to carry out its mission of delivering conservation solutions to agricultural producers?²

I will work to ensure NRCS has the resources necessary to continue performing mission critical functions.

¹ *Secretary Rollins Announces USDA Reorganization, Restoring the Department’s Core Mission of Supporting American Agriculture*, U.S. Department of Agriculture (Jul. 24, 2025), <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2025/07/24/secretary-rollins-announces-usda-reorganization-restoring-departments-core-mission-supporting>

² *About NRCS*, Natural Resources Conservation Science (2025), <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about>

- b. If confirmed, how will you ensure that any changes to USDA's structure or staffing do not impede the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) ability to carry out its mission to equitably serve all farmers and ranchers through effective and efficient agricultural programs?³

I will work to ensure FSA has the resources necessary to continue performing mission critical functions.

- c. If confirmed, how will you ensure that any changes to USDA's structure or staffing do not impede the Risk Management Agency's (RMA) commitment to increasing the availability and effectiveness of Federal crop insurance?⁴

I will work to ensure that RMA has the resources necessary to continue performing mission critical functions.

- 2. Last year, Congress appropriated \$21 billion to USDA for emergency natural disaster funding to help farmers recover from disasters like Hurricane Helene. I am glad that Congress included flexibilities for this disaster assistance, such as allowing the funding to be administered in state block grants, and that applications for some of this funding are finally open.⁵ However, farmers in Georgia needed this critical assistance months ago, and there is still too much time before this funding reaches all of their pockets.

- a. If confirmed, what improvements would you make to the disaster assistance distribution process to ensure farmers get the support they need after a disaster?

Secretary Rollins has publicly announced her intent to rapidly implement disaster assistance. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting her in this effort.

- b. Will you commit to meeting with Georgia's Agriculture Commissioner to ensure disaster relief reaches all of Georgia's farmers and foresters in need of assistance?

Meeting with appropriate state stakeholders is important when building state-specific block grants. If confirmed I will engage stakeholders to the maximum extent practicable.

- c. If confirmed, how will you ensure that local FSA offices have the necessary resources and staffing to swiftly distribute this funding to all of Georgia's farmers who need it?

Secretary Rollins has publicly announced her intent to rapidly implement disaster assistance. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting her in this effort.

³ *History and Mission*, Farm Service Agency (2025), <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/about-fsa/history-mission>

⁴ *What We Do*, Risk Management Agency (2025), <https://www.rma.usda.gov/about-rma/what-we-do>

⁵ *2023/2024 Supplemental Disaster Assistance*, Farm Service Agency (2025), <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/resources/programs/20232024-supplemental-disaster-assistance>

3. On July 10, 2025, the Trump USDA published a final rule titled “Removal of Unconstitutional Preferences Based on Race and Sex in Response to Court Ruling.” Within this rule, the Trump Administration announced that it will no longer apply race- or sex-based criteria to its decision-making processes for many farm support and conservation programs, arguing that these efforts are “no longer necessary.”⁶
 - a. Are you aware that in 2022, an analysis⁷ found that FSA denied Black farmers loans at rates higher than any other group?

If confirmed, I commit to reviewing this analysis.
 - b. Given this rule, how will you ensure all farmers have access to USDA programs, including loans?

If confirmed, I commit to following the law.
 - c. Have you met with Black farmers who experienced discrimination by USDA? If not, and if you are confirmed, will you commit to meeting farmers who have experienced discrimination by USDA to hear their stories?

If confirmed, I commit to requesting a briefing on these claims.
4. Recent reporting found that staff from the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) have gained access to USDA’s National Payment Service, which tracks payments made to farmers and houses private data on our nation’s producers.⁸
 - a. As a previous FSA Administrator and participant in USDA’s farm programs, are you concerned about this report?

Because I am not at the Department, I do not possess sufficient knowledge of the facts to offer a comment on the matter.
 - b. If confirmed, will you commit to revoking this access?

Because I am not at the Department, I do not possess sufficient knowledge of the facts to offer a comment on the matter.
 - c. If confirmed, will you commit to investigating whether DOGE staff made any changes to farmers’ payments or put farmers’ data at risk?

⁶ Removal of Unconstitutional Preferences Based on Race and Sex in Response to Court Ruling, 90 Fed. Reg. 30555 (Jul. 10, 2025).

⁷ Ximena Bustillo, *In 2022, Black Farmers Were Persistently Left Behind from the USDA’s Loan System*, NPR (Feb. 19, 2023), <https://www.npr.org/2023/02/19/1156851675/in-2022-black-farmers-were-persistently-left-behind-from-the-usdas-loan-system>

⁸ Jenna McLaughlin, *DOGE Keeps Gaining Access to Sensitive Data. Now, It Can Cut Off Billions to Farmers*, NPR (Jul. 11, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/07/10/nx-s1-5455779/doge-usda-farmers-data>

If confirmed, I will familiarize myself with all relevant facts on this matter.

- d. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure that this level of security breach does not happen again?

Because I am not at the Department, I am not aware of the details of this question. If confirmed, I will familiarize myself with all relevant facts on this matter to inform my decision making.

- e. If confirmed, what will you do to rebuild trust with farmers who trusted USDA with their personal data?

Because I am not at the Department, I am not aware of the details of this question. If confirmed, I look forward to maintaining USDA's strong relationship with American farmers.

- 5. The Hurricane Insurance Protection-Wind Index (HIP-WI) has been an important lifeline for producers in Georgia who are recovering from Hurricanes Helene⁹ and Debby.¹⁰ However, I have heard from farmers in my state that the Risk Management Agency's (RMA) indemnity payment process for HIP-WI, which relies solely on data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA),¹¹ has left some producers out when local data shows they should have received indemnity payments for hurricanes in 2024.

- a. If confirmed, how will you work to maintain and strengthen the Federal Crop Insurance Program's vital public-private partnerships to help ensure that all of Georgia's farmers have access to our nation's farmer safety net?

If confirmed, I will work to ensure crop insurance is available to all farmers to the maximum extent practicable.

- b. If confirmed, will you commit to working with Congress and NOAA to improve HIP-WI's indemnity payment process so that this policy better meets the needs of farmers in the wake of hurricanes?

⁹ Richard Flournoy, *Product Management Bulletin-PM-24-067 Hurricane Insurance Protection - Wind Index (HIP-WI) Payment Indicator and Trigger Event Date for Helene 2024*, Risk Management Agency (Oct. 11, 2024), <https://www.rma.usda.gov/policy-procedure/bulletins-memos/product-management-bulletin/2024/pm-24-067-hurricane-insurance>

¹⁰ *USDA Makes Indemnity Payments to Producers Impacted by Hurricane Debby*, Risk Management Agency (Aug. 23, 2024), <https://www.rma.usda.gov/news-events/news/2024/washington-dc/usda-makes-indemnity-payments-producers-impacted-hurricane>

¹¹ *Hurricane Insurance Protection - Wind Index (HIP-WI)*, Risk Management Agency (Jan. 2025), <https://www.rma.usda.gov/about-crop-insurance/highlighted-initiatives-plans/hurricane-insurance-protection-wind-index>

If confirmed, I look forward to working with all parties to improve crop insurance as a risk management tool.

6. From our state's famous peaches to our high-quality pecans and our sweet Vidalia onions, Georgia is home to a wide variety of specialty crop farmers. While crop insurance programs are a vital part of the farmer safety net, specialty crop farmers in Georgia have faced difficulty finding insurance programs that comprehensively meet their unique and diverse needs. If confirmed, will you commit to working with my office and this Committee to provide crop insurance policies and other risk management tools that meet the needs of Georgia's specialty crop farmers?

If confirmed, I commit to engaging with specialty crop stakeholders to better understand their unique challenges and opportunities.

7. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act includes a provision that provides farmers with an opportunity to voluntarily increase their allocations of base acres.¹²
 - a. If confirmed, how will you work with Secretary Rollins to ensure these base acres are equitably allocated to underserved farmers, including those who are veterans, socially disadvantaged, and/or new or beginning?

If confirmed, I will work to ensure these provisions are implemented in compliance with the law.

- b. If confirmed, how will you work with Secretary Rollins to ensure these base acres are equitably allocated by region?

If confirmed, I will work to ensure these provisions are implemented in compliance with the law.

- c. If confirmed, how will you ensure that local FSA offices have the resources and staffing needed to carry out this application and base acre allocation process?

I will ensure FSA offices have the resources necessary to carry out mission critical work.

8. In Georgia, the Natural Resource Conservation Service's critical and voluntary conservation programs continue to be oversubscribed.¹³ Despite the popularity of these programs, reporting has found that USDA has delayed some conservation program payments to farmers as part of the agency's review of these programs.¹⁴ If you are

¹² One Big Beautiful Bill Act, Pub. L. No. 119-21.

¹³ *USDA Conservation Programs: Nationally Valued, Locally Driven, and Oversubscribed*, Bipartisan Policy Center (2023), <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/download/?file=/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Conservation-Programs-Infographic.pdf>.

¹⁴ P.J. Huffstutter and Leah Douglas, *USDA Freezes Farmer Funding for Some Programs, Conservation Contracts* (Feb. 8, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/usda-freezes-farmer-funding-some-programs-conservation-contracts-2025-02-08>.

confirmed, how will you work with Secretary Rollins to ensure that the rollout of any current or future conservation funding is swiftly distributed to farmers and rural communities instead of being caught up in lengthy reviews?

I look forward to working on improving the efficiency of all FPAC programs, including conservation programs.

Senator Peter Welch

1. Mr. Fordyce, if confirmed, would you be willing to work with Congress to reduce bureaucracy in the administration of NRCS easement programs? I'd like to work together to keep farmland in the hands of farmers, which often involves using non-profit entities to affordably transfer lands. Do you believe that NRCS easement programs can not only protect agricultural lands but also, at no additional cost, support the affordable transfer of those lands to the next generation of producers?

If confirmed, I commit to working with you to improve the conservation easement program.

2. Many small-scale, diversified farmers do not hold crop insurance. This is especially true of our farmers in Vermont. They understand that the climate crisis is putting their livelihoods at risk, and they want to have crop insurance, but most of the products that exist are not designed with their needs in mind.

Most crop insurance offerings are geared towards commodity producers leaving specialty crop producers with very limited options. Similarly, the Noninsured Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), which is not technically crop insurance, is supposed to be a solution, but farmers say the program can be expensive and extremely burdensome, especially if you are growing multiple crops. To add insult to injury, the payouts from NAP tend to be a fraction of the actual loss because the prices used to calculate loss do not take into account regional variations and the premiums specialty crops receive in areas like the Northeast.

I have long advocated for improvements to our risk management programs, including my *WEATHER* Act which would direct the Risk Management Agency to set up an index-based crop insurance product that covers revenue losses for entire States. I hope that we can work together to get this policy and other policies geared at small-scale farmers implemented as quickly as possible. Mr. Fordyce, as you will oversee the Risk Management Agency and The Farm Services Agency, how will you work with me and this Committee to expand the farm safety net to better protect and provide for our small, beginning producers who do not have adequate risk management products?

If confirmed, I commit to working with your office to improve crop insurance options for specialty crop growers.

3. We've lost about 1/3 of our NRCS staff in Vermont since Trump took office. This concerns me because we need our NRCS staff to help farmers manage their land sustainably, improve agricultural productivity, and protect natural resources. Mr. Fordyce, you are a farmer who has used USDA programs. I know you understand the importance of USDA staff in helping farmers navigate the application process.

- a. What impact do you think low staffing levels have on the NRCS's ability to support producers effectively?

Because I am not at the Department, I am not aware of the details of this question.

- b. If confirmed, can you commit to advocating for maintaining appropriate staff levels and keeping NRCS offices open?

If confirmed, I will work to ensure NRCS has the resources necessary to carry out mission critical work.

4. Access to land is a foundational need for the success of beginning farmers and ranchers, and it is also often the most significant cost involved in starting and sustaining an operation. Farmers rely on access to credit to manage this cost and compete in a fast-paced real estate market. As land values rise and farmers face increasing competition from non-farming buyers, it is essential to ensure that agricultural lending opportunities are meeting the needs of underserved farmers and ranchers.

- a. Do you commit to ensuring loans are accessible to beginning, young, and socially disadvantaged farmers?

I will commit to following the law.

- b. Do you commit to working with my office to help build pathways to land ownership and access to credit for beginning, young, and socially disadvantaged farmers?

If confirmed, I commit to working with your office to ensure farm loans are available to all farmers to the maximum extent practicable.

Senator John Fetterman

1. I support voluntary conservation incentives, to help farmers keep their air, water, and environment clean. Dairy farmers in PA benefit from recent investments in USDA funding to reduce methane emissions, which improves the air quality of the local environment. Methane digesters, a technology USDA has supported, diversify dairy

farms' energy, driving the president's energy dominance agenda. Will you commit to continuing to support methane use tools through conservation programs?

If confirmed, I will support eligible voluntary incentive-based conservation practices for dairy farms.

2. Like we discussed during the hearing, we share a commitment to insuring crops that need the option. I believe mushrooms should be eligible for crop insurance. Mushroom growers in Pennsylvania feel jerked around after having opinions solicited for years about the potential for a crop insurance product for their industry. How will you ensure you and your team are responsive to the needs of one of PA's prized agriculture industries?

If confirmed, I will ensure my team is responsive to the needs of Pennsylvania farmers to the maximum extent practicable.

3. The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) allows companies, wildlife groups, farm groups, and others to design innovative conservation programs tailored to local needs and conditions. However, RCPP project leads often complain about lengthy and burdensome USDA processes that undermine producer confidence.

- a. If confirmed, will you commit to streamlining RCPP implementation?

I will work to improve the efficiency of the RCPP application process.

- b. Specifically, will you work to increase coordination between FSA and NRCS so that RCPP project leads can quickly determine producer eligibility and get money into the hands of farmers?

If confirmed, I will work to improve the efficiency of the RCPP application process.

Senator Adam Schiff

1. I sincerely appreciate the verbal discussion we had at the hearing about fair USDA support for all of California's agricultural communities. I understand that specialty crop producers have not historically had the same level of interaction with USDA as commodity crop producers, and I appreciate your past and future efforts to address that.
 - a. Do you commit to making future additional efforts so that USDA and the specialty crop community, including small- and mid-sized producers, can continue to build a relationship and so that USDA can better understand the challenges and opportunities in specialty crop farming?

If confirmed, I commit to engaging with specialty crop stakeholders to better understand their unique challenges and opportunities.

- b. Do you commit to helping deliver to specialty crop growers a fairer distribution of USDA funding than has been dealt in the past?

If confirmed, I commit to ensuring specialty crops are considered for USDA programming when lawful and appropriate.

- c. Do you commit to the creation and implementation of formulas, applications, and other aspects of USDA program implementation so that specialty crop and diversified growers receive their fair share of USDA support?

If confirmed, I commit to ensuring specialty crops and diversified farming operations are considered for USDA programming when lawful and appropriate.

- d. Do you commit to nonpartisan, unbiased distribution of USDA disaster aid that accounts for all states, California and beyond, and for specialty crop production?

Secretary Rollins has publicly announced her intent to rapidly implement disaster assistance. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting her in this effort.

- 2. I am grateful for USDA's rollout of the Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops (MASC) program. I have heard about a few issues with MASC implementation from California stakeholders, including (i) delays in payment due to low staffing and (ii) concerns that the IRS's lack of timely processing forms will lead to conversion of MASC payments to debt. Do you commit to timely and smooth rollout of MASC payments?

Because I am not at the Department, I am not aware of the details of this question.

- 3. California is the nation's largest agricultural economy, and has some of the most diverse farmers, and thus production, in the country. Given your past experience at USDA, can you elaborate on the importance of diversity on county committees to USDA programs and assistance reaching underserved producers?

County committees play a key role in the delivery of USDA programs.

- 4. Given your past experience at USDA and as a farmer, do you agree that USDA should continue supporting conservation programs to help farmers build resilience against floods, drought, fires, and other extreme weather events? California faces particular challenges with water scarcity. Can you speak to why conservation programs are important to address water scarcity in the West and how you will work with me and my Western colleagues on efforts to conserve water in agriculture?

Voluntary, incentive-based conservation initiatives are a cornerstone of the Farm Production and Conservation Mission Area. I commit to working with you and your colleagues to address resource scarcity concerns to the maximum extent practicable.

5. As you may know, USDA has scaled back the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). In a statement in June 2025, USDA said that it is "distributing the [RCPP] projects equally across geographical regions and limiting projects to one per state." However, the current list of 2024 RCPP projects on USDA's website lists no projects for the state of California, and more than one project for other states. Previous versions of 2024 RCPP projects on USDA's site indicated multiple projects for California. While I understand you were not at USDA while such decisions were made, do you commit to (i) sharing more with my team and the Committee about why they were made, (ii) why USDA's public statement differs from reality, and (iii) accordingly, whether any California RCPP projects will be restored?

Because I am not at the Department, I am not aware of the details of this question.

6. I am grateful for Secretary Rollins and USDA's collaboration in keeping several USDA offices in California open, after they were placed on the DOGE lease termination list. However, I remain deeply concerned about the already high number of lost USDA staff, which may only increase with further reductions in force. Based on your past experience at USDA and as a farmer, can you speak to how sufficient staffing at USDA is critical to helping American farmers access programs and necessary resources?

The agencies within the Farm Production and Conservation Mission Area play fundamental roles in ensuring our nation's farmers can feed, fuel, and clothe the world. I am committed to making certain the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Risk Management Agency have the resources needed to carry out the mission critical work they do.