

U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
Full Committee Hearing
Review of the USDA Reorganization Proposal
July 30, 2025

The Honorable Stephen Alexander Vaden
Testimony

Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for your invitation to discuss the U.S. Department of Agriculture's July 24, 2025 memorandum regarding planned optimization, consolidation, and reorganization efforts.

I committed to engaging with Congress and appreciate your near instant interest to publicly provide feedback to ensure our nation's farmers, ranchers, foresters, and consumers receive the service and support the Department is mandated to provide, all while respecting the generosity of the American taxpayer.

President Trump made clear his second term would include relocating the sprawling federal bureaucracy to locations outside the National Capital Region. The Department's July 24 memorandum begins to deliver on this promise and does so in a way that right sizes the USDA footprint, eliminates unnecessary management layers, consolidates redundant or duplicative functions, and most importantly, allows USDA to deliver on its mission to the American people within the bounds of its available financial resources.

Over the course of the last four years, the Department has seen its budget explode. The prior administration not only burdened the taxpayer through questionable policymaking but also by hiring thousands of employees and maintaining a massive real estate footprint that USDA's budget could not support. If any business or farm family managed its resources the way USDA did the prior four years, it would be bankrupt.

All USDA employees began to work remotely in March 2020 and continued to do so for more than 1,700 days. Upon President Trump's inauguration, employees returned to the office. The Department's success depends on collaboration and community, not remote work at home or desks in secluded, small spaces. Nothing will curtail 163 years of institutional knowledge and USDA's commitment to America's farm families and rural communities.

I am pleased with the groundwork the Secretary has laid over the last several months, and together we look forward to implementing this plan to bring the Department back to the people whom it serves. But again, this is an initial step, not the final one. Your feedback, and that of our employees, is welcomed.

Again, thank you for inviting me to testify to discuss the Department's proposal. I look forward to receiving your questions.