



Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry

Subcommittee on Commodities, Risk Management, and Trade

Commodity Programs, Credit, and Crop Insurance – Part 1: Producer Perspectives on the Farm Safety Net

May 2, 2023

Chairwoman Smith, Ranking Member Hyde-Smith, and Subcommittee Members:

I am Greg Ackerman, a farmer from Vassar, Michigan, past chairman of the Michigan Bean Commission and a current Delegate with the U.S. Dry Bean Council. On our family farm we currently grow corn, soybeans, sugar beets, wheat, pickles, and dry edible beans including black, navy, and small red beans and many other classes over the years.

We really focus on dry beans in our business. Dry bean production fits so well in our operation. They have a tremendous sustainability story to tell. They are a short season crop that doesn't need much water or fertilizer and allow our soil to rest a little. In addition, we are proud to be producers of a very healthy, nutrient dense, plant based super food. I believe beans are part of the solution to solving world hunger and are also a piece of the solution to climate change.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. The sole farm safety net program for dry bean producers is the federal crop insurance program. The federal crop insurance program should be maintained and expanded, where possible. Federal support for insurance premiums increases participation and coverage levels carried by growers. The more participation and coverage provided through the crop insurance program, the less need there will be for ad hoc disaster assistance. The fact that dry beans are not part of the Farm Programs authorized under Title I of the Farm Bill makes the federal crop insurance program even more vital for us.

Beyond crop insurance, the other Farm Bill and federal policy priorities for the dry bean industry include:

Increased funding of MAP and FMD



The US Dry Bean Council along with seventy other agricultural trade organizations receive MAP and FMD. Both programs are authorized in the Farm Bill at \$200 million at \$34.5 million per year, respectively.

The authorized spending level for MAP and FMD has been flat for approximately 20 years. Sequestration, inflation, administrative fees, etc. have reduced the real funding available to these seventy organizations to a real value of only 150 million. The USDBC supports an increase in the funding authorization levels for MAP and FMD in the next Farm Bill as we rely on this funding for our global competitiveness and as we face unprecedented trade challenges.

Continuation of the McGovern Dole School Feeding and Food for Progress Programs

The McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program supports education, child development and food security in food insecure countries. The program, authorized under the Farm Bill, provides for the donation of U.S. agricultural commodities, including dry beans, as well as financial and technical assistance, to support school feeding and maternal and child nutrition projects. USDBC supports full funding of no less than 230 million and ideally increased funding to respond to increased need as a result of climate change, civil conflict, and food inflation.

Reauthorization of Pulse Crop Health Initiative

The Pulse Crop Health Initiative (PCHI) is authorized under the Farm Bill, currently at \$25 million per year. Actual annual appropriations for the PCHI have not reached the fully authorized level but have been increasing each year for the past several years from \$3 million in FY2019 to \$5.5 million in FY2023. The purpose of the PCHI is to find solutions, through research on pulse crops - including dry beans - to critical health and sustainability challenges. USDBC requests reauthorization of the PCHI at \$25 million and full annual appropriation of the funding for each year of the Farm Bill.

Continuation of the Sclerotinia research initiative

USDBC requests reauthorization of the National Sclerotinia Initiative under the Farm Bill. The goal of the NSI is to employ a coordinated research strategy to minimize the devastating effects of Sclerotinia (white mold) which causes serious economic loss by negatively impacting crop quality and yields with losses in some years exceeding \$250 million.

Finally, since this subcommittee jurisdiction includes Trade issues, we would like to take this opportunity to urge you to renew support for expanded Trade and new Trade Agreements. The U.S. has not signed a new trade agreement for many years. With the competitive environment changing, particularly in a post pandemic world, the U.S. dry bean industry needs competitive trade advantages around the world. We continue to suffer from lost market share in the European Union and the United Kingdom as a result of years of retaliatory tariffs. U.S dry beans were a large exporter to these regions before the tariffs and since the tariffs have been lifted we have not been able to regain those



markets back. We are concerned that current Trade Agreements in discussion do not include traditional market access chapters or agriculture.

The dry bean industry also supports normalized Trade relations with Cuba. Cuba presents a tremendous market prospect for our industry; however, we remain unable to do business with Cuba due to a complicated trade environment and lack of reasonable financing options for Cuban buyers.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.

Sincerely,

Greg Ackerman

Greg Ackerman
Past President, Michigan Bean Commission
Delegate, U.S. Dry Bean Council