

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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FRUIT AND VEGETABLE INDUSTRY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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MEETING

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TUESDAY
MAY 9, 2017

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The Fruit and Vegetable Industry
Advisory Committee met in Potomac 1 and Potomac 2
of the Hyatt Regency, 2799 Jefferson Davis
Highway, Arlington, Virginia, at 8:30 a.m., Beth
Knorr, Chair, presiding.

MEMBERS PRESENT

BETH KNORR, Chair, Executive Director, Cuyahoga
Valley Countryside Conservancy

ROBERT NOLAN, Vice Chair, Owner/Operator, Deer
Run Farms, LLC

CHRISTIE BALCH, Executive Director, Crossroads
Community Food Network

VIRGINIA BARNES, Manager, Food Safety and Public
Relations, Barnes Farm, LLP

CARLOS CASTANEDA, Principal, Castaneda & Sons,
Inc.

HELEN DIETRICH, Owner/Human Resources Manager,
Ridgeview Orchards, LLC

KRISTINE ELLOR, Mycologist/Technical Director,
Phillips Mushroom Farms

RICHARD HANAS, Vice President and Chief
Operating Officer, A. Duda & Sons, Inc.

JOHANNA HERRON, Marketing Manager, Alaska State
Department of Agriculture

MICHAEL JANIS, Market Manager, San Francisco
Wholesale Produce Market
MARTIN MALDONADO, General Manager/Supply Chain

Director, Pure Fresh, LLC

ROLAND MCREYNOLDS, Executive Director, Carolina
Farm Stewardship Association

MARK NICHOLSON, Co-Owner/Manager of Fresh Sales,
Red Jacket Orchards

PATRICK ROGERS, Owner/Operator, McAlister and
Rogers Farms

DANIEL SUTTON, General Manager, Pismo Oceano
Vegetable Exchange

HARRY TALBOTT, Vice President of Farm
Operations/Co-Owner, Talbott's Mountain
Gold, LLP

JORGE VAZQUEZ, President/CEO, Latin Specialties,
LLC

THOMAS WILLIAMS, Director, Produce and Floral,
Coborn's

DAVID YANDA, President & CEO, Lakeside Foods,
Inc.

OTHERS PRESENT

MARLENE BETTS, Acting Designated Federal
Official

GREG ASTILL, Economic Research Service, USDA

SAMIR ASSAR, CFSAN, FDA

RONALD BATCHER, AMS, USDA

JAN CARLSON, CFSAN, FDA

SASHA BARD CHAMBERLAIN, FNS, USDA

LORELEI DISOGRA, United Fresh

ERIN GREETHER, United Fresh

ERIN HEALY, FNS, USDA

ANDREW JERMOLOWICZ, Rural Development, USDA

ED KALEIKAU, NIFA, USDA

KEN KECK, AMS, USDA

TRICIA KOVACS, USDA

TERRY LONG, AMS, USDA

JULIE MANES, United Fresh

MAXIMILIAN MERRILL, National Farm to School
Network

TRAVIS MINOR, Economic Research Service, USDA

ERIN MORRIS, AMS, USDA

ARTHUR NEAL, AMS, USDA

KEN PETERSEN, AMS, USDA

LAURA PHELPS, American Mushroom Institute

CHRISTOPHER PURDY, AMS, USDA

CARL PURVIS, AMS, USDA

LEANNE SKELTON, AMS, USDA

BRUCE SUMMERS, AMS, USDA

NATHANIEL "CHIP" TAYLOR, Specialty Crop
Inspections, USDA

LORENZO TRIBBETT, AMS, USDA

KIMBERLY THOMPSON, Food Directions

SHONTAI VANCE, Schramm, Williams & Associates

JESSICA WASSERMAN, Wasserman & Associates

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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 (8:37 a.m.)

3 MS. BETTS: All right. Well, David's
4 kind of getting situated. I know we kind of
5 squeezed some people in. I just would like to
6 say, welcome. My name is Marlene Betts. I'm the
7 acting Designated Federal Official.

8 As you all know, Pam Stanziani has
9 taken on another position. So, thank you so much
10 for, you know, all of the craziness that's gone
11 on for the past few months of me trying to get up
12 to speed, and figure out what the working groups
13 are, and who everybody is, and all of the crazy
14 emails, and all of that kind of good stuff.

15 But we just want to thank you, and
16 thank you all for coming. Welcome to Washington.
17 With that, I just want to do just a few
18 housekeeping items.

19 As you see we have a court reporter
20 here, and all of the mics. I know lots of folks
21 don't like to talk into the mics. But that helps
22 him. So, anytime you need to speak, just press

1 the button and speak into the mic. If the folks
2 along the side of the room, if you could step up
3 to one of the mics and ask your question, or make
4 a comment that would be much appreciated as well.

5 Bathrooms are outside. The men's
6 restroom is straightaway. The women's is down to
7 the left. You can't miss it. Take a left, and
8 it's on the right hand side.

9 We do have some more coffee coming.
10 Water in the back of the room. Let's see, what
11 else do we have for housekeeping? We do have
12 some space set aside upstairs at the lunch room
13 upstairs for the noon hour. Everybody has to pay
14 their own way. But we do have some space set
15 aside.

16 Also, after hours in the lobby we do
17 have some space set aside for cocktails if folks
18 want to gather at the end of the day to kind of
19 unwind, or what have you. Again, everybody pays
20 their own way. But they will have a space set
21 aside for us upstairs as well.

22 Let's see. In your packets in front

1 of you, I just wanted to kind of go through that.
2 There's a lot of information in there. There's
3 the agenda for the day.

4 There's the travel guide. I gave you
5 a copy of that, which, between Melissa and I,
6 we're going to be kind of bouncing around with us
7 here, USDA staff. We'll go through that here in
8 a little bit for what you need to do for your
9 travel voucher and your guide.

10 There's another handout that Tricia
11 Kovacs, who will be speaking later this morning,
12 asked me to put in your packet, that has kind of
13 the supply chain information in there. There's a
14 charter in there that talks about what we're all
15 here for.

16 On the right hand side there's draft
17 recommendations that have come through the Food
18 Safety Working Group, that we'll be discussing
19 either later this morning or early this
20 afternoon.

21 There's a roster of the full
22 Committee. Unfortunately some people could not

1 make it for this one. But that is the full
2 roster. We do have 25 people at this point in
3 time.

4 And then there's also a working group
5 roster. And I know we have three new folks. And
6 that was the, what I would like to welcome to the
7 Board. Patrick Rogers is new, from Tennessee.
8 Johanna Herron, I think she's farther down. And
9 Martin Maldonado is our three new members to the
10 Board.

11 And I don't think they have signed up
12 for a Committee. So, if you could let me know
13 before the end of this meeting which one that you
14 might like to partake, that would be awesome.
15 And if there's any movement as to the working
16 groups or whatever, just let me know.

17 And then of course there's an AMS
18 handout that's in there, that kind of gives folks
19 a little background of what AMS is all about.
20 So, with that, I just want to kind of hit some
21 highlights from the charter, and then I'm going
22 to turn it over to Melissa Bailey who will walk

1 us through the agenda.

2 But as you know, this is a federal
3 advisory committee. We meet about twice a year.
4 We're governed under the Sunshine Act. So, this
5 is a public meeting, open public meeting. And
6 it's supported by all of these smaller working
7 groups, which we will hear about here in a little
8 while.

9 The nomination process is pretty much,
10 we put out a notice in the Federal Register. And
11 basically the industry nominates everyone that
12 sits around the room. We go through the vetting
13 process. And basically the Secretary of
14 Agriculture appoints you.

15 And also in the charter it lists all
16 of the different sectors in the fruit and
17 vegetable industry. That's represented, so I
18 won't bore you with all that.

19 The charter does expire in July. We
20 are working on trying to get that done. As you
21 know we have been in transition. So, we're
22 trying to work through the transition, and try to

1 get the charter renewed. And once that gets
2 renewed we will start the nomination process.

3 I believe there are ten members whose
4 terms expire in July of this year. I think
5 that's on the roster, whose term expires. So, as
6 soon as, that kind of package is all moving
7 together. So, once we get some movement, now
8 that we have a Secretary, we will let you all
9 know. And that will be going out in the Federal
10 Register.

11 As I said, I'm the Designated Federal
12 Officer. And Erin Morris is the Executive
13 Secretary, providing the leadership. I provide
14 the administrative support basically.

15 And basically the expectation that we
16 have for the Committee is that you work as a
17 team, and try to determine the issues that are
18 important to the industry. And then hopefully at
19 the end of the day that you may establish some
20 recommendations, as there are some drafted in
21 your handout. And/or some statements that we can
22 bring forward to the Secretary.

1 We want you all to participate. So,
2 hopefully the mics won't be prohibitive of
3 everybody speaking and providing feedback. We
4 all really want you to hear your perspective. I
5 think that makes for a great meeting, and a great
6 product at the end. So, please, participate.

7 Like I said, we have I think five or
8 six working groups. And if you feel like we need
9 to create another one, or maybe we need to put
10 one on a shelf, or whatever, we can do that as
11 well.

12 Again, this is kind of your meeting.
13 We're here to help facilitate. And I think that
14 is pretty much what I wanted to say. And so,
15 with that I think I'm going to turn it over to
16 Melissa Bailey.

17 She is our Associate Deputy
18 Administrator for Specialty Crops. And she's
19 going to walk us through the agenda and some
20 other items that she may have on her list. So,
21 Melissa.

22 MS. BAILEY: Great. Thanks, Marlene.

1 So, I'm Melissa Bailey. I'm one of two Associate
2 Deputy Administrators with the Specialty Crops
3 Program at AMS.

4 I have met a number of you when I've
5 popped in at some of the past meetings. So, I've
6 had some involvement in things you've worked on
7 before.

8 And it's great to see some familiar
9 faces, both from those meetings, but also, I've
10 worked with Roland before on some issues. Used
11 to work with Tina on a previous advisory
12 committee. So, it's nice to see everybody. And
13 welcome.

14 So, I also want to just take a minute
15 to really thank Marlene, because just with all
16 the transition she's been great at jumping and
17 learning a whole lot at once about how this
18 advisory committee functions. And so, just thank
19 you for all of your efforts.

20 And so, you may note that the agenda
21 is slightly different than how we've structured
22 it in the past. I think what we're trying to do

1 is keep focus on the three areas that the
2 Committee seemed most interested in after
3 October.

4 That's not to say there aren't other
5 areas. But for the purpose of this meeting we've
6 sort of structured it into those three areas.
7 So, after I go over the agenda we'll do
8 introductions of the Committee, as well as
9 anybody from USDA who hasn't yet introduced
10 themselves.

11 Marlene's already covered the role of
12 the Committee and charter, and the meeting
13 process. We will do -- Marlene, did we send the
14 2016 meeting summary out? Or are we not doing
15 that?

16 MS. BETTS: I did not do that.

17 MS. BAILEY: Okay.

18 MS. BETTS: I was trying to feverishly
19 do it through all of the transcripts that are
20 posted on the website.

21 MS. BAILEY: Yes.

22 MS. BETTS: It looks like the basic

1 thing that came out of it were the working groups
2 from the last meeting.

3 MS. BAILEY: Yes.

4 MS. BETTS: So, but I can certainly
5 send that out after. I kind of put something
6 together yesterday really quickly.

7 MS. BAILEY: Yes.

8 MS. BETTS: But we haven't had really
9 a chance to look at that.

10 MS. BAILEY: Yes. So, that's the
11 meeting summary from the 2016 meeting. We'll go
12 ahead and circulate that to the Committee just by
13 email.

14 Essentially the last meeting was
15 fairly organizational. And just getting sort of
16 structured into your working groups. But as
17 Marlene said, the transcripts from that meeting
18 have been posted on line on the advisory
19 committee page.

20 Then we'll move into USDA reports. We
21 have our Acting Administrator here to give you an
22 update from the Agency, USDA perspective. Erin

1 will also provide some commentary. And then
2 we'll just go over briefly the travel
3 reimbursement information.

4 At that point we have a brief period
5 of time for public comments, should there be any.
6 And then we will somewhat pass the meeting to our
7 Chair and Co-Chair of the Committee, Beth and
8 Bob, to facilitate for this, later this morning
9 and this afternoon.

10 So, moving into sort of the first
11 focus area is going to be the Food Safety Working
12 Group. We have a number of speakers, both from
13 USDA and FDA. And I won't go through. But you
14 can see exactly who will be coming, and what
15 topics they'll be covering, based on feedback
16 from that working group.

17 That will bring us right up to
18 probably lunch time, given the number of people
19 that are speaking, and the focus that this
20 Committee has had on that issue, particularly
21 given the Food Safety Modernization Act.

22 So, we'll have lunch. At 1 o'clock

1 we'll come back. And there are three draft
2 recommendations from the working group. And
3 Roland will be sort of spearheading walking
4 through those with the Committee.

5 And that's mainly just to give an
6 initial presentation of those, so you can hear it
7 right after you've had the context from FDA and
8 USDA, and start thinking about as a committee if
9 the content of those draft recommendations are
10 things you'd like to vote on as a final
11 recommendation from the Committee.

12 So, there will be an opportunity for
13 more discussion on that tomorrow morning. Then
14 we'll move into, from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., our
15 Produce Consumption Working Group, which has been
16 led by Christie.

17 And we have two speakers from Food
18 Nutrition Service coming. One had actually given
19 a presentation on one of the subcommittee calls
20 that we felt would be helpful for the whole
21 Committee to hear. Really with the charge of,
22 are there ways to increase fruit and vegetable

1 consumption in the school feeding programs.

2 And then we'll have another speaker
3 talk about farm to school. And then there will
4 be some opportunity for any discussion. They
5 don't have a draft recommendation at this time,
6 but may have some initial ideas to share with the
7 Committee.

8 At 3 o'clock we'll move into the
9 Research and Grants Working Group, which has been
10 chaired by Roland. And we have a number of
11 speakers, again, based on the interests of the
12 few subcommittee calls that we have had since the
13 last meeting, to talk about a range of things
14 from plant breeding and support for plant
15 breeding programs, wholesale markets and
16 infrastructure funding. And we'll have both
17 Rural Development from USDA, as well as some ag
18 marketing service representatives.

19 And again, an opportunity for
20 discussion right after those speakers, in the
21 event that that working group would like to bring
22 anything forward tomorrow.

1 At 4:30 p.m. we will have our Director
2 of Market News for Specialty Crops, Terry Long,
3 come and bring a brief overview of kind of what's
4 new in AMS Market News for you.

5 This Committee has always been a great
6 support of Market News information. And I think
7 that's something that Tom wanted to bring
8 forward, just and update. And if there's any
9 further recommendation from the Committee at that
10 time, with the plan to recess at 5:00 p.m. today.
11 So, that sort of outlines the plan for today.

12 Moving in to tomorrow, Wednesday
13 morning, we wanted to provide an opportunity for
14 some of the other working groups, who maybe
15 haven't been quite as active, leading up to this
16 meeting, new farmer advocacy and mentoring, ag
17 labor. I think there was a mention at one point
18 of some broadband, interest in broadband and
19 increasing that.

20 So, we'll leave some time, about an
21 hour, for general comments from the folks on
22 those subcommittees who might want to start

1 thinking about future recommendations. And then
2 we'll have an opportunity for the working groups
3 who do have recommendations, or want to continue
4 formulating things, to meet.

5 And a lot of tomorrow is really
6 centered around giving you guys an opportunity,
7 face time, to further develop, and put any final
8 recommendations forward to the Department.

9 And then at 1 o'clock we will adjourn,
10 and make sure we get our famous advisory
11 committee group photo, which is always the
12 highlight for everybody. And so, basically
13 that's the agenda.

14 One other thing I have shared, I think
15 with Bob and Beth before, and I would like to
16 share here is, we would like to, moving forward,
17 get into kind of routine of, when the Committee
18 makes recommendations, providing sort of a formal
19 response back on those.

20 So, any, I think our commitment would
21 be, anything coming out of this meeting, that we
22 would then circulate back at some point, you

1 know. It may take a little time. But a
2 memorandum or response to kind of, what are
3 USDA's next steps with regard to the
4 recommendations that you've made?

5 We would like to get into a better
6 system of being able to track all the
7 recommendations, and kind of where we ended up on
8 things. As I know that's come up a few times at
9 past meetings.

10 So, we do have a plan for that,
11 following after this meeting. And welcome any
12 feedback as we kind of roll that out to see if
13 that works for everybody. So, that's something
14 that's on our radar. Yes.

15 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Melissa, Roland
16 McReynolds, Carolina Farm Stewardship
17 Association. Very much welcome this idea of the
18 sort of formal response back. Is that going to
19 retroactively apply to our past recommendations?
20 Or is this just a going forward?

21 MS. BAILEY: I think, this is Melissa
22 again. I think initially we'll start with going

1 forward, so that we can get a system in place
2 that makes sense.

3 And then, if there are particular
4 recommendations that, you know, the folks here
5 have known, they've worked on, and kind of
6 wondered what happened.

7 I think we would like people to bring
8 those to our attention, as we kind of get a
9 handle on those past ones. So, sort of a
10 combination approach is kind of how I would
11 envision that working.

12 Great. That is all I have on the
13 agenda. Marlene, unless you have anything else?

14 MS. BETTS: No. Maybe now is a good
15 time to have everybody introduce themselves
16 around the room. And maybe say your name, who
17 you're representing, and maybe a fun fact that
18 you want people to know about you, you know,
19 whether it's a hobby, anything.

20 So, with that I'm going to let Mark
21 get us started. Okay. I'll start. We'll go
22 this way around the room then. Okay. Marlene

1 Betts. I'm obviously with USDA. I'm Acting
2 Designated Federal Official.

3 My everyday job I'm with the Promotion
4 and Economics Division in the Specialty Crops
5 Program. We work with the Research and Promotion
6 Programs. I'm currently working with some, one
7 of our newer programs, the Paper and Packaging
8 Board, which has been quite interesting, working
9 with the paper industry, and helping to get
10 people to use paper again, which I'm a very big
11 advocate of, as you can see. And I'm also
12 working with the avocado industry as well.

13 I enjoy traveling. Just got back from
14 vacation in Myrtle Beach. And just like to
15 travel throughout the U.S., and trying to do some
16 more traveling overseas. Looking at possibly
17 getting back to New Zealand next year, hopefully.
18 So, really enjoy traveling. So, with that, I
19 will pass it on.

20 MS. BALCH: Hi, everyone. I'm
21 Christie Balch. I'm the Executive Director of
22 the Crossroads Community Food Network. We're

1 based in Tacoma Park, Maryland, right outside of
2 D.C.

3 On this committee I chair the Produce
4 Consumption Working Group. And we are, we would
5 love more members. So, new members, you are
6 welcome to join, and old members too.

7 And a fun fact, in my spare time I'm
8 a volunteer EMT and firefighter at my local fire
9 station.

10 MR. JANIS: Hi. Good morning. I'm
11 Michael Janis. I'm with the San Francisco
12 Wholesale Produce Market. We're in San
13 Francisco, obviously, California.

14 I sit on the Food Safety Working
15 Group, as well as the Grants and Research. And I
16 want to thank Roland for all his leadership on
17 those committees.

18 A fun fact, I actually grew up not far
19 from where Bob grew up, on Long Island, even
20 though I've been down in San Francisco a long
21 time. I'm sure that's it. All yours.

22 MR. WILLIAMS: All right. I'm Tom

1 Williams. I'm the Director of Produce and Flora
2 for Coborn's. We're a family ran, employee owned
3 group of grocery stores in Minnesota, Wisconsin,
4 North Dakota, South Dakota. We have 50 stores.

5 And a fun fact. Well, I also love to
6 travel. And our kids got that same bug. And so,
7 our middle son has announced that he's going to
8 do a destination wedding next year.

9 And it's going to be in a place where
10 we love, which is in Maui. But that is a true
11 destination wedding. The fun fact will be the
12 expense of the destination wedding. That's it
13 for me.

14 MS. BAILEY: Melissa Bailey, Associate
15 Deputy Administrator with Ag Marketing Service.
16 I've been with USDA for about seven years now.
17 And worked in university and private sector
18 before. Also worked for the National Organic
19 Program before coming to Specialty Crops Program,
20 which is how I know Tina.

21 And I work primarily at USDA with the
22 Perishable Ag Commodities Act Division, Marlene's

1 group, the Promotion Economics Team, as well as
2 the Marketing Order and Agreements Division.

3 And my fun fact is, this fall I did my
4 first half marathon. So, and now I have the bug.
5 So, hopefully that will last. And, I don't know,
6 my running group keeps telling me maybe I'll do a
7 marathon. But that seems a little extreme to me.
8 So, thanks.

9 MR. SUMMERS: Good morning, everybody.
10 I'm Bruce Summers. I'm the Associate, one of the
11 Associate Administrators in AMS. But I'm
12 currently pretending, or acting as the AMS
13 Administrator.

14 Fun fact is, when they, in January
15 when they said you're going to be Acting
16 Administrator, that could last an hour, or it
17 could last a few months. Well, we blew through
18 the first hour, and it's still going.

19 MS. MORRIS: This is going to be fun
20 all day. Hi. I'm Erin Morris. I am currently
21 the Acting Deputy Administrator of the Specialty
22 Crops Program. And I'm the other Associate

1 Administrator. So, Bruce and I are having fun
2 wearing multiple hats these days. A good time.

3 I've been with AMS for just over 18
4 years in a variety of different places. And have
5 loved every one of them. So, thanks so much for
6 allowing me to participate in this meeting today.

7 A fun fact for me, I'll keep the
8 travel bug going. We love to travel. It's
9 either Disney World, or Europe. Those are pretty
10 much the only two places that we go. But it's a
11 good time.

12 MR. YANDA: Good morning. I'm Dave
13 Yanda, recently retired, and CEO of Lakeside
14 foods in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. We have 13
15 plants, pretty much throughout the Midwest. And
16 been on the Committee for, I know many of you
17 have been here for a couple of years. So, really
18 enjoy seeing everyone.

19 A fun fact is that we left Siesta Key,
20 Florida last week, Sunday morning. And it was in
21 the high 80s. And I left my driveway in
22 Wisconsin yesterday, and it was 29 degrees. A

1 little culture shock.

2 MS. HERRON: Hello. My name is
3 Johanna Herron. I work for the Division of
4 Agriculture in Alaska. I run the Market Access
5 and Food Safety Section, which covers specialty
6 crop, country of origin, marketing, farm to
7 school, a bunch of different things.

8 Let's see, a fun fact. I could tell
9 you a bunch of Alaska fun facts maybe. So, we
10 have communities that are as far apart as San
11 Francisco to Chicago.

12 And I would say some of the most
13 unique things that grow up there, I've seen
14 somebody starting a variety of cactus that's
15 going well. And grapes, kiwi, some interesting
16 different, different things creep up there, just
17 not in good volume.

18 MR. CASTANEDA: Good morning. My
19 name's Carlos Castaneda. I'm out of California.
20 I'm been a farm labor contractor since 1991,
21 although the past few years I've turned into an
22 H2A labor contractor. Now the ratio's about two

1 to one.

2 Fun fact, last night I got the most
3 sleep I've had in many years. I have four
4 children, 7, 5, 3, and 1. So, you can do the
5 math.

6 MR. TALBOT: Bruce Talbot from
7 Palisade, Colorado. We are peach and grape
8 producers. We are about halfway between Denver
9 and Salt Lake, to give you a feel, on the
10 Colorado River. And fun fact, I still referee
11 soccer, though I take ibuprofen before I start.

12 MS. DIETRICH: Good morning. I'm
13 Helen Dietrich, from Michigan. We grow apples,
14 asparagus, and cherries. Fun fact, I'm on our
15 Library Board. And we just increased the size of
16 our library. We doubled it. And it will open
17 next week. So, we're really excited about that.

18 MR. PURDY: Hi. I'm Chris Purdy. I'm
19 one of the other Associate Deputy Administrators
20 for Specialty Crops Program, with Melissa. I
21 work with the Inspection Division, Market News,
22 the Food Safety Audit Program.

1 I'd also like to put a little
2 commercial in. I work with the produce industry
3 to help encourage sales of produce to the
4 Commodity Procurement Program within USDA.

5 We buy about a half a billion dollars'
6 worth of various forms of fruits and vegetables.
7 And so, if you're interested in learning more
8 about it come see me.

9 MR. SUTTON: Good morning. My name is
10 Dan Sutton. I'm general manager of Pismo Oceano
11 Vegetable Exchange. We are a grower/shipper of
12 fresh produce in California.

13 A fun fact, my family is from England.
14 And we applied several years ago, and found out
15 about a year ago that I had been given the title
16 of Count in England. I know that doesn't mean
17 anything here in this room to any of you. but
18 when I go back to England the title Count does
19 mean something.

20 (Off microphone comments.)

21 MR. HANAS: Good morning, everyone.
22 I'm Rick Hanas, formerly with A. Duda & Sons for

1 46 and a half years, as Executive Vice President
2 and COO. I just retired in February. But I'm
3 still going to do some consulting work for the
4 company. So, I'm going to be part of some other
5 associations that we're involved with.

6 Fun fact, one of them is my wife loves
7 to travel. So now I'm going to be traveling with
8 her. We're fixing to go to Stockholm, and then
9 go up, and then go over to Russia.

10 And the other fun fact is I've got two
11 grandchildren. And now I get to spend as much
12 time as I want with each one of them. They're 5
13 and 1 years old.

14 MR. VAZQUEZ: Good morning, everyone.
15 I'm Jorge Vazquez, President of Latin Specialties
16 in Houston, Texas. So, we are a family owned
17 produce distribution and fresh cut operation.

18 I've been with the Committee for, this
19 is going to be my third year, I think. And my
20 term's about to expire. But it's fun and, you
21 know, I love all of the time, spending time with
22 all of you guys.

1 Fun fact, I like to scuba dive. Used
2 to run a lot. So watch out for your back,
3 because -- but you can definitely do the
4 marathon, you know. So, go for it. Thank you.

5 MS. BARNES: My name is Virginia
6 Barnes. But I like to be called Gin. Virginia I
7 feel like I'm in trouble. I work for my family's
8 fifth generation farm in Florida. And right now
9 we are growing solely cabbage, 1,000 acres, which
10 is a lot.

11 And a fun fact, I used to travel with
12 a Blue Grass festival. So, I've been to every
13 state except Alaska. And I'm going next June.

14 MR. MALDONADO: Good morning. My name
15 is Martin Maldonado. I am from Miami, Florida.
16 Don't hate me. We grow and market berries,
17 mostly blackberries, raspberries, and
18 blueberries.

19 A fun fact, I grew up right across the
20 river in Washington, DC. And I want to go look
21 at the house where I grew up 35 years ago,
22 tomorrow afternoon. So, I'll let you know how it

1 looks.

2 MS. KNORR: Good morning. I'm Beth
3 Knorr. I'm the Director of Summit Food Coalition
4 in Peninsula, Ohio. And a fun fact, I really
5 love pie, did not get enough of it in my life.
6 So, I have decided to tackle the art of making
7 crusts in 2017.

8 MR. NOLAN: I'm Bob Nolan, owner of
9 Deer Run Farms. It's a fourth generation
10 vegetable farmer from Long Island. Former Long
11 Islander here.

12 And we grow lettuce, like eight or
13 nine different types of lettuce, spinach,
14 escarole, chicory. We got into some of the
15 herbs, basil, arugula, stuff like that. So,
16 trying to market more locally, and take advantage
17 of that.

18 Fun fact, I used to referee high
19 school basketball, but I gave it up. So, I don't
20 need ibuprofen. So --

21 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Good morning,
22 everybody. My name's Roland McReynolds. I'm

1 Executive Director with the Carolina Farm
2 Stewardship Association.

3 We're a member organization,
4 representing farmers and businesses in North and
5 South Carolina that are in the markets for local
6 and organic foods, and especially crops, major
7 products that our folks produce. We're based in
8 Pittsboro, North Carolina, in the Raleigh,
9 Durham, Chapel Hill area.

10 And a fun fact, I lived in France for
11 a year with my family, back in 2005. My daughter
12 was actually born while we were over there. And
13 my son went to preschool over there. So, he used
14 to speak French.

15 MR. ROGERS: Hi. My name is Patrick
16 Rogers. I prefer to be called Mack. I'm from
17 Tennessee. After hearing your nice operations I
18 realize I'm the minority representative on this
19 Board. We're probably the smallest farmer
20 around.

21 But we're here, I'm here because of
22 the United States Sweet Potato Council. And

1 that's what I've been a part of for several
2 years. And we're here basically to make all our
3 potato farmers rich.

4 Interesting fact about me, we were
5 doing great until about two weeks ago. Our
6 family was on CBS news. We received five and a
7 half inches of hail, and six inches in 15
8 minutes, and six inches of rain in 24 hours.

9 So, count your blessings when you see
10 a hailstorm at somebody else's place. That's our
11 biggest claim to fame lately.

12 MS. ELLOR: Tina Ellor, Phillips
13 Mushroom Farms. I think this is my last meeting,
14 unless we re-up, which I guess we have the
15 opportunity to do that if we want to.

16 I worked with the American Mushroom
17 Institute, the whole time of it in the mushroom
18 industry. Fun fact, I'm also married to a
19 mushroom grower. Mushrooms 24/7.

20 MR. NICHOLSON: Good morning. I'm
21 Mark Nicholson with Red Jacket Orchards. The
22 farm's located in Geneva, New York. I'm third

1 generation. I have a twin brother in the
2 business.

3 People who attend industry meetings,
4 or even USDA staff, way back when, when I was an
5 intern in college, I was followed the immediate
6 summer by my brother in the exact same branch,
7 which created a little confusion. And they still
8 remember us.

9 We're 450 acres of fruit. And we have
10 a juice processing facility as well. I guess my
11 fun fact is two things. One, if you see me
12 waking around in a Cub Scout uniform later today,
13 it's because I have, I'm the Cub Master for a
14 local pack here, even though I live, even though
15 the farm's in New York, I live here in Mt.
16 Vernon, Virginia. So, after this meeting I will
17 be running that in uniform.

18 The other fun fact is, let's see, my
19 daughter stole my phone, and I can't figure out
20 how to get the, you can't see it now because a
21 text came up. There's a chubby unicorn on here.
22 So, if anybody knows how to get these changed,

1 let me know.

2 MS. BETTS: Well, thank you,
3 everybody. And I think we might as well take the
4 time to go around the room. So, if you guys,
5 Leanne, if you could go to the mic and introduce
6 yourself, and Laura, and everybody kind of peel
7 off and just introduce yourselves. That would be
8 awesome.

9 MS. SKELTON: Yes. So, good morning,
10 everybody. I'm Leanne Skelton. I'm with
11 Specialty Crop Program. Worked in Erin's office.
12 And I'm the liaison to FDA on FSMA kind of stuff.

13 If you still want a fun fact, I am a
14 sports fan. But that's not really the fun part.
15 It will be fun later this week. But, yes, when
16 the Cavs win. I'm actually a shirrtail, or
17 shoestring relation to Red Skelton.

18 MS. PHELPS: I'm Laura Phelps. I'm
19 with the American Mushroom Institute. And I'm
20 chairman of the Tina Ellor fan club. And to
21 follow on Tina's remark about 24/7 mushrooms, I
22 just got back from a three week trip to Africa.

1 And we went on a safari. And the
2 guide one night looked at me. And he said, can
3 you put me in touch with someone who can teach me
4 how to grow mushrooms? And I'm like, oh, why
5 can't I get away from this? But anyway.

6 MS. MANES: Hi. I'm Julie Manes with
7 United Fresh Produce Association, here in D.C.
8 Thanks.

9 MR. PURVIS: Hi. I'm Carl Purvis.
10 I'm with the AMS Public Affairs Office.

11 MR. ASTILL: Hi. I'm Greg Astill.
12 I'm an economist with the USDA Economic Research
13 Service. And I've been there just over a year
14 now. I got thrown into a lot of stuff about
15 produce and food safety. And I've been really
16 enjoying it.

17 Last year we went on a trip to
18 Michigan, talked to growers there. And I've just
19 been planning a trip to southern California, and
20 then we're going to go to Florida also this
21 summer.

22 MS. VANCE: I am Shontai Vance. I am

1 in intern on behalf of Schramm, Williams and
2 Associates. A fun fact about me, I have been in
3 D.C. for less than a week. And so, I'm also new
4 in town. And I also can speak Chinese.

5 MS. BETTS: I think that's everybody
6 around the room. The other guy behind me that's
7 running all the show is our court reporter, Sam.
8 So, thank you everybody for introducing
9 yourselves. And I think with that I'm going to
10 pass it over to Erin Morris. And she will be
11 introducing our next speaker.

12 MS. MORRIS: Yes. Maybe I can just
13 yell from here. So, anyway I know we just did
14 introductions. But I will take a moment just to
15 introduce Bruce Summers again, who is no stranger
16 to the produce folks in his little over 20 years
17 with AMS.

18 He spent most of it in what was
19 formerly known as Fruit and Vegetable, now
20 Specialty Crops. I still have to work on that,
21 by the way. I'll be saying that five years from
22 now.

1 But we feel very, very fortunate to
2 have Bruce in both of his roles as Associate
3 Administrator, and certainly Acting
4 Administrator. He's very familiar obviously with
5 most of the issues that are near and dear to your
6 hearts. So, we find that that's really helpful
7 to us. And without further ado, Bruce.

8 MR. SUMMERS: Thanks, Erin. So, Erin
9 and I both have the same title. So, you know,
10 I'm the Associate Administrator, she's the
11 Associate Administrator. And so, I like to say,
12 I'm Darryl, and this is my sister, Darryl. If
13 you're old enough to remember that show on TV,
14 right.

15 So, hey, it's really good to be here
16 with you. And I appreciate the invite from
17 Melissa and Erin to come over and talk to you.
18 There's probably a word you're going to hear a
19 little bit this week, or the next two days. And
20 Melissa already said it once. And that's
21 transition.

22 So, you know, we are in the middle of

1 a transition. And I imagine as you talk to a
2 number of the other career Government folks who
3 are going to roll through over the next day and a
4 half, you're going to hear a lot about
5 transition.

6 And we are very much in the middle of
7 the transition, or towards the end of the
8 transition, or at the beginning of the
9 transition. We're not really sure. But we are
10 definitely in transition.

11 You know, I started my job as the
12 Associate Administrator basically the 1st of
13 November. And a week later we had an election.
14 And then the transition started, as we started to
15 work to, you know, move the folks who have been
16 here, a lot of them for eight years, out, and
17 then in January the new folks in.

18 So, I really have no idea what my real
19 job is going to be like. Because I've been in
20 transition since about the sixth day I got the
21 job. So, but you're going to hear a lot about
22 transition.

1 And I have a few remarks I thought I'd
2 provide. And I'm not used to giving a speech
3 sitting down. And I'm not used to giving a
4 speech where I can't see everybody. So, if I get
5 up and start pacing you'll understand why.

6 But, you know, I have a few remarks I
7 wanted to give. If you have questions, I'm happy
8 to try and answer them, as far as what's going on
9 at AMS and at USDA.

10 But it is an interesting time. It's
11 been the first transition I've been at a level
12 where I really noticed. And it's kind of been a
13 kind of fun process. But it's interesting to see
14 how the U.S. Government works in the middle of
15 transition. And it works.

16 You know, we are across the board
17 USDA. But with respect to AMS, you know, we're
18 out there. We're creating product. We're
19 issuing Market News reports. We're holding
20 advisory committee meetings.

21 We're doing this one this week. A
22 couple of weeks ago we did the National Organic

1 Standards Board. You know, the point is, you
2 know, we're operating, you know. It's up. It's
3 running. We're doing things we have to do.

4 There's some things we're holding off
5 on while we wait for the political leadership to
6 get in place. That makes sense. They get to,
7 you know, set priorities and establish some of
8 the things that they want to do.

9 But the long and short of it is we're
10 still delivering the services that are kind of
11 the bread and butter of what AMS does. So, I
12 think it's important that everybody knows that
13 that's what's going on.

14 So, two weeks ago, two weeks ago today
15 actually, you know, we marked a really important
16 milestone in the transition, because Sonny Purdue
17 arrived at the USDA on the Tuesday morning. And
18 he talked about, in his remarks to the staff, how
19 important it is for USDA to provide high quality
20 essential services and products to our
21 stakeholders.

22 He talked about the need to make

1 everyone, or make sure that everyone has a seat
2 at the table. And I don't think he was
3 necessarily envisioning this advisory committee
4 when he said that. But that's really what this
5 advisory committee is about, making sure that
6 everybody has a seat at the table.

7 And that's why it's really important
8 to have an advisory committee like the USDA Fruit
9 and Vegetable Industry Committee that you all are
10 a part of. You're representing diverse
11 backgrounds, interests. You provide an insight
12 on to how USDA can best help the produce industry
13 running vital, right. That's what we're about.

14 AMS is about facilitating, marketing
15 of agricultural products. This committee is part
16 of helping us do that. We need to hear from you
17 all, so that we can provide the best products
18 possible, the best services possible to help the
19 produce industry remain vital.

20 So, I don't necessarily think he was
21 looking at you all when he said that. But that's
22 really what he was talking about. So, I want to

1 congratulate you all for being a part of this
2 committee. I want to welcome the new members.
3 And I want to thank all of you for your service.

4 A little bit about my background, you
5 know, as Erin alluded to. I spent a long time in
6 the Fruit and Vegetable Program. And then after
7 I left they changed the name. I don't know why.
8 So, I left, they changed the name.

9 But I was, years ago I spent a lot of
10 time with this committee, different people, but
11 this committee, when I was working running the
12 PACA program, the Perishable Agriculture
13 Commodities Act.

14 And when I was the director of that
15 program we received a ton of support from the
16 advisory committee. We were, at a time that we
17 were trying to kind of right size the program,
18 there had been a lot of changes in the industry,
19 not a lot of changes in the bureaucracy, so to
20 speak.

21 And so, we were looking at, you know,
22 what's the right size that the PACA Program

1 should be with respect to number of employees,
2 number of offices? We kind of had the same setup
3 for years and years. And what should the fee
4 levels be? Because we were looking at, you know,
5 trying to address funding issues.

6 And so, we spent the better part of a
7 year, maybe a year and a half with the advisory
8 committee. And meetings like this, and
9 subcommittee meetings, and lots of discussions.
10 Came up with a plan that was really instrumental
11 in what the PACA Program looks like today.

12 Again, could we have done it without
13 the Committee? Yes, maybe. Probably so. Would
14 it have been a good plan as it was? No,
15 absolutely not. We really, really, really,
16 relied on the industries' feedback, suggestions,
17 ideas on what it should look like.

18 And if you, you know, how much this
19 committee has looked at the PACA Program as it is
20 today. But it's basically, what you have today
21 is what that Advisory Committee helped us design
22 about ten years ago.

1 The funding level hasn't changed. The
2 offices, it's a very stable program now. And a
3 lot of that has to do with the decisions that
4 were made and influenced by the Fruit and
5 Vegetable Industry Commodity, Fruit and Vegetable
6 Industry Advisory Committee.

7 So, what you're doing is important.
8 What you're doing can have long lasting impacts.
9 I want you to know that.

10 I just want to kind of step back and
11 talk a little bit about Agriculture Marketing
12 Service. You know, we take a lot of pride in
13 working together with our industry stakeholders
14 to craft solutions to problems that you all bring
15 to us.

16 You won't often hear AMS going out to
17 industry and saying, we figured out what you all
18 need. It's usually not how it works, almost
19 never works that way at AMS. If you look at what
20 AMS does most of our programs are voluntary.
21 They're user fee funded.

22 And to the extent that they involve

1 regulatory requirements, it's usually another
2 agency or another country that's imposing the
3 regulatory requirements. And generally what
4 we're doing is trying to help the industry
5 demonstrate that they're in compliance with those
6 requirements.

7 An example of that would be, you know,
8 our export verification programs. So, we have
9 worked with industry to develop export
10 verification programs from everything to dairy,
11 poultry, meat, and for you guys, almonds,
12 pistachios, peanuts, and orange juice.

13 Again, those are all requirements we
14 didn't impose. Those are, for the most part,
15 requirements imposed by foreign countries.

16 The industry will come to us and say,
17 boy, we need to get a product into Korea, say for
18 example, orange juice, which was a big one we
19 worked on a few years ago. And there was a huge
20 tariff on orange juice going into Korea if we
21 couldn't demonstrate that all the orange juice we
22 were exporting was from the U.S.

1 We worked with the industry. We set
2 up a program. South Korea now takes U.S. orange
3 juice at very, very low import duties. Again, a
4 problem brought to us by industry. We worked
5 with the industry to try and solve that problem,
6 so they can facilitate their products, or their
7 movement of their product.

8 So, those are some of the specific
9 ways, you know, we like to work with industry, we
10 like to work with the Advisory Committee. But
11 there is beyond just specifics.

12 If you just think about other import
13 and benefits of a committee like this, you know,
14 the more you know about us, and the more we know
15 about you, the better we can work together.

16 So, even if we're not, I mean, just
17 what we did right now, going around the table and
18 introducing ourselves, and fun facts. The more
19 you know us, and the more we know you, the better
20 we can work together.

21 And so, even if we don't have a
22 specific issue to work on this morning, coming

1 together, meeting, letting us hear about your
2 concerns, your challenges, us tell you about the
3 services we can provide, and how we might be able
4 to help is still very, very, beneficial.

5 I want to open it up for questions.
6 But let me just finish by saying, thank you,
7 thank you, thank you, for taking time away from
8 your businesses, your families. At least you
9 still get to go to your Cub Scout meetings.
10 You're cheating.

11 But I just want you to know, you know,
12 we take the input and the advice that we receive
13 from the Committee. And we really, really do
14 rely on it. And so, we really thank you for your
15 time. Appreciate you coming all the way to
16 Washington, DC for those who traveled, well, a
17 pretty long way from Alaska. But we really do
18 appreciate it.

19 So, before I introduce Erin, are there
20 any questions? Anything folks are wondering
21 about what's going on in Washington, DC? What is
22 going on in Washington, DC? How's that for an

1 open ended question?

2 (Off microphone comment.)

3 MR. SUMMERS: No. But Erin does.

4 MR. NOLAN: I just have a quick
5 question.

6 MR. SUMMERS: Shoot.

7 MR. NOLAN: Last week I was -- last
8 week or two weeks ago. I don't know. Time
9 flies. There was some farmers met with the
10 President and the Secretary. Would you be able
11 to tell us, you know, what came out of that
12 meeting, or just some of the highlights? Or, you
13 know, a status?

14 MR. SUMMERS: So, here's a fun fact
15 about that meeting. So, the Secretary, you know,
16 went over with a handful -- a pretty big handful
17 of industry over to the White House, and met with
18 the President.

19 Two people in that group were former
20 Fruit and Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee
21 members. So, that's pretty cool. So, you guys
22 could be with the next President.

1 Now, I didn't get any specific
2 feedback on that. I think it was kind of a
3 general discussion of the challenges, you know,
4 the things they had to talk about, right, labor,
5 trade. The AG was there from California. You
6 know he talked about water, right.

7 But I think it was a fairly general
8 discussion. But it, I mean, the important thing
9 is, hey, day 1, new Secretary, you're in at the
10 White House. Pretty cool, yes. And I think that
11 may have played into some of the discussions
12 about what happened with NAFTA last week, as in
13 not pulling out.

14 MR. NOLAN: Okay.

15 MR. NICHOLSON: Just a quick question
16 as well. Mark Nicholson. It's probably one you
17 can't answer. But is there a sense of timeline
18 for getting in the political leadership at the
19 levels, and allowing you to return to you day to
20 day?

21 MR. SUMMERS: No. There isn't a
22 timeline. I mean, you know, getting the

1 Secretary onboard, obviously hugely important.
2 And we're looking to see what happens with the
3 Deputy.

4 You know, we're not yet, if you go
5 back eight years, we kind of got spoiled over the
6 last eight years. Because at USDA is was really,
7 really a stable political workforce, you know.

8 The Secretary was one of the longest,
9 well, in modern time he's the longest serving
10 Secretary, you know, the full seven years, or
11 whatever it was.

12 But we're really not that far behind
13 on things like appointments for the
14 Administrator. At this time eight years ago we
15 did not have an AMS Administrator. So, but we
16 don't have a timeline. We're not panicked yet
17 either. Well, I'm not, they are.

18 MR. VAZQUEZ: I got a question. How's
19 the funding looking for the USDA under the new
20 administration?

21 MR. SUMMERS: So, we did really well
22 in the FY '17 budget. You know, we were

1 operating under what they call a continuing
2 resolution for the first half of this fiscal
3 year. So, we got our final numbers for Fiscal
4 Year '17 a week ago, two weeks ago.

5 And we're funded right where we need
6 to be. The administration's proposal for Fiscal
7 Year '18, and our Fiscal Year starts on October
8 1st. Probably everybody knows that now, because
9 of all of the discussions about shut downs over
10 the last ten years.

11 But those numbers will come out on the
12 week of May 22nd. And the Secretary will be
13 testifying on the Hill about that either that
14 week or the week after. So, we're waiting for
15 those final numbers for Fiscal Year '18. Won't
16 be long now.

17 MR. MCREYNOLDS: And for, Roland
18 McReynolds. Just to follow up on that, the
19 President's skinny budget is a pretty hefty cut
20 from current funding levels. Obviously that was
21 done without Secretary Purdue in place to sort of
22 talk, advocate, you know.

1 Any sense of Secretary Purdue's stance
2 about the cuts that were proposed, and how me
3 might address that in the final version of the
4 budget?

5 MR. SUMMERS: I mean, he has made some
6 public comments. And certainly I think
7 supportive of what the administration proposed.
8 Not too surprising.

9 I would say, with AMS the thing to
10 remember, and I kind of alluded to it in part of
11 my remarks. Two-thirds, almost 70 percent of
12 AMS's budget is generated through user fees.

13 So, you know, when we're talking about
14 the budget for AMS, the appropriated amount, the
15 discretionary amounts are a much, much smaller
16 portion of AMS's operating funds. So, we tend to
17 be a little insulated at AMS from some of the ups
18 and downs of the appropriation process.

19 So, you know, inspection, the GAP
20 Programs, things like that, all user fee funded.
21 So, not impacted by the budget discussions on the
22 Hill.

1 All right. Good questions all. I
2 really appreciate your time. And, what time is
3 it, 9:30 a.m.? I think I'm, I think I used up
4 all of Erin's time.

5 MS. MORRIS: That's okay. I'll be
6 brief.

7 MR. SUMMERS: So, I get to introduce
8 Erin. So, my other colleague, Darryl. So, there
9 are other associate administrators. So, Erin and
10 I work really closely together in helping to run
11 this big organization called Agriculture
12 Marketing Service. And Erin has worked in a
13 number of different program areas, livestock,
14 poultry --

15 MS. MORRIS: Dairy.

16 MR. SUMMERS: Dairy. And as part of
17 the transition last fall Erin agreed to help out.
18 We were trying to cover a lot of different things
19 at one time. So, Erin moved over and started
20 helping with the Specialty Crop Program.

21 And it's been almost six months now.
22 And I think she's gotten her written notes. Now

1 that you've seen all of the other commodity
2 programs, no pressure. But Specialty Crops is
3 pretty good, right?

4 MS. MORRIS: Absolutely. It's the
5 best.

6 MR. SUMMERS: There you go. Had to
7 push that out. Anyway, so Erin, I'll give you
8 the floor. And if you want me to move a seat,
9 sit comfortably at that microphone? How about
10 that? I don't think that cord's going to reach.

11 MS. MORRIS: I'm not nearly as funny
12 as he is. But I'm sure if you have any questions
13 after I talk he'll be happy to answer them.

14 So, again, just welcome to everybody.
15 And I just want to echo, we can't thank you
16 enough for really investing your time and energy
17 in this Committee. It really does make a
18 difference.

19 And we really do look to this
20 Committee to give us the valuable input that we
21 need about our programs and services, and just
22 making sure that each and every day, that we out

1 there sort of making a difference, and helping
2 you all solve some of your challenges.

3 And I want echo Melissa's thanks to
4 Marlene. She really has just stepped into this
5 role seamlessly. And we can't thank her enough
6 for all the time and energy, in addition to her
7 day job, that she has put into this.

8 So, as Bruce alluded to, you know, the
9 Specialty Crop industries is so keenly important
10 to USDA's overall success with fruit and
11 vegetables representing over \$45 billion dollars
12 in annual sales, which if you stop to think about
13 it for a minute, you know, that's really
14 incredible.

15 As Bruce alluded to with Mr. Purdue
16 just being onboard now for just a couple of
17 weeks, we haven't yet had the chance to sit down
18 and talk with him, and learn more about what his
19 interests are.

20 But he has certainly hit the ground
21 running. And has already made a few visits to
22 various places. And has indicated that at USDA

1 we're going to be literally rolling up our
2 sleeves, and trying to ensure that we have a
3 customer service focus.

4 I like to think in AMS that, more so
5 than any other agency, not that I'm biased. We
6 really, really do have a customer service focus.
7 And we're very fortunate with the statute that we
8 have that that really does give us a lot of
9 latitude to do a lot of incredible things, and
10 really work with you all to help solve problems
11 and challenges.

12 I always like to joke that if there's
13 something going on in the Department, some kind
14 of need that's identified, and it doesn't have a
15 stated home, then it almost always comes to AMS.

16 So, we like to think that we have
17 built a culture and environment of having staff
18 and employees who are really willing to go above
19 and beyond whatever is necessary. And to really
20 come up with, as Bruce said, some creative
21 solutions.

22 So, I just want to talk for a few

1 minutes to his some highlights about what's going
2 on in the Specialty Crops Program. Bruce talked
3 a little bit about PACA. We have five divisions,
4 including PACA, that, and we have about 1,000
5 full time, full and seasonal employees who help
6 us carry out that work.

7 We are well represented here today by
8 most of our divisions, as Marlene mentioned.
9 She's from the Promotion and Economics Division,
10 which kind of has two parts to it.

11 One is overseeing 17 Research and
12 Promotion Boards, which Marlene can attest to,
13 keeps our folks very, very busy. All of those
14 Boards have a lot of great programs going on that
15 are trying to help their various industries.

16 And there's also an economic piece to
17 that, as Chris mentioned. A lot of that group's
18 time is spent helping to do some economic
19 analysis for the various industries. Certainly
20 when folks are coming in and asking for surplus
21 removal requests, and then also doing some other
22 general things to help provide support.

1 We also have our Marketing Order and
2 Agreement Division, which is helping to oversee
3 all of our Marketing Order Boards and Committees,
4 which again is chiefly important.

5 And when you look at the MOAD Boards
6 and the Promotion, Economic, and Research Boards,
7 the Research and Promotion Boards, I think a lot
8 of times, you know, we still work on the
9 education component with folks, to just help them
10 understand what those programs are all about, how
11 they're similar, how they're different, how
12 they're funded and structured.

13 As Chris mentioned, we also do
14 purchase about a half a billion dollars in fruits
15 and vegetables for our surplus removal programs,
16 again which is a great opportunity for the
17 Specialty Crops industry.

18 And obviously we have a great story,
19 in that, you know, these foods provide such a
20 nutritionally valuable component to our school
21 kids, and a number of our other nutrition
22 assistance programs.

1 And then at PACA, as Bruce mentioned,
2 is another one of our, I think great stories
3 where, you know, we're out there each and every
4 day helping to, you know, settle disputes,
5 working with folks. And I think we give kudos to
6 those folks on a daily basis for really being of
7 value to the industry.

8 So, looking at this particular
9 Committee, and as Melissa said, we want to get
10 sort of more structured in terms of responding to
11 your recommendations.

12 I did want to just touch on a couple
13 of the things that we have been working on in
14 part, because of the previous input that we've
15 gotten from you all.

16 So, part of that is working on the
17 implementation of FDA's FSMA. As Leanne
18 introduced herself, we do have that liaison
19 position, which, you know, we hear time and time
20 again how the produce industry values that
21 position, and really trying to provide some of
22 the technical expertise to FDA as they work to

1 implement their rule.

2 We're also, on that vein, taking steps
3 to help with training and education. Making sure
4 that all the industry members are getting the
5 training that they need to help meet FSMA's
6 requirements. We've hosed a myriad of different
7 webinars, again, trying to really promote
8 education.

9 I think as most of you know we are a
10 key cooperator with the Produce Safety Alliance,
11 along with FDA and Cornell. And training has
12 really been a huge focus. To date PSA has almost
13 950 PSA trainers, and well over 100 PSA lead
14 trainers to support this effort.

15 So, again, we recognize that this is
16 of key concern to the industry. And we're trying
17 to make sure that everyone feels like they have
18 the opportunity to participate in some of these
19 training sessions, so that they can truly
20 understand what they need to do to comply.

21 Another way we're working to help
22 producers of all sizes is through our group GAP

1 Program. And as Melissa mentioned, we will have
2 Ken Petersen here talking with you all later this
3 afternoon, who is the head of our audit program.

4 We've talked about group GAP with you
5 all in the past. I'm pleased to report, so, in
6 2016 we certified eight groups, which represents
7 just over 300 growers. In 2017 we've had four
8 new groups apply, which represents another 55 or
9 so growers. And then, we still expect to get
10 another seven, sort of over the course of the
11 next year or two.

12 So, we've seen some incredible growth
13 in that program. And again, that's just another
14 way that, you know, we've tried to identify
15 solutions of how we can help the produce
16 industry.

17 I also want to touch briefly in ITDS,
18 the International Trade Data System. Hopefully
19 you all are familiar with that. I know sometimes
20 in the Government we do have a way of getting
21 carried away with our acronyms. So, forgive us.

22 But over the years we've heard from

1 the Committee that you really wanted us to
2 strengthen our relationship with the Customs and
3 Border Protection folks. Obviously there are a
4 lot of different fruits and vegetables that are
5 imported. And that number continues to grow.

6 And with all of the requirements that
7 are out there, this is a keen example of how we
8 have tried to be more efficient to cross
9 Government, and kind of moving with the digital
10 age.

11 So, we did have a successful pilot
12 program using our, I'll spell it out, and not use
13 the acronym, Compliance and Enforcement
14 Management System, otherwise known as CEMS, as we
15 call it. And CBP's Automated Commercial
16 Environment, otherwise known as ACE.

17 And again, you know, we're trying to
18 facilitate electronic reporting there to meet the
19 different requirements. And trying to make
20 things more efficient. And we will continue to
21 work in that effort.

22 I did also want to just briefly touch

1 on our user fees. Bruce mentioned our agency is
2 predominantly funded by user fees. And again,
3 based on a 2015 recommendation that came out of
4 this Committee, just last week we sent to you a
5 notice indicating that we were raising our fees
6 again this year.

7 We did have another increase the year
8 before. Hopefully that should take care of us
9 for several years. But we did find ourselves in
10 a position, after really not raising our fees for
11 the previous ten years, that we had some catching
12 up to do. So, we appreciate your support in that
13 effort.

14 And lastly, I just wanted to close by
15 saying again that, you know, the work that you
16 all are going to do here over the next day and a
17 half is really, really important.

18 We're invested and committed to your
19 success. And we know that you are too. And that
20 you all are here, again, representing the entire
21 fruit and vegetable industry. And through the
22 Committee's work we'll continue to make sure that

1 producers across the country are more successful.

2 I think, you know, this Committee and
3 our partnership really helps ensure that we do
4 have those direct ties, and kind of the direct
5 voice to what's going on out there. And again,
6 trying to make sure that, you know, the things
7 that we're doing in AMS are relevant, and are
8 what's needed.

9 So, thank you again for coming. And
10 with that, I think we'll continue along, so we
11 can hopefully keep you guys on track and on time
12 today, so we can get you out of here on time, and
13 off to your Cub Scout meeting.

14 I'll digress and say that I have two
15 Boy Scouts now, so thank you for your service.
16 It's not easy, I know. I've been there.

17 MS. BETTS: Okay. Well, thanks, Erin.
18 I guess next on the agenda we will do a little
19 bit more housekeeping, in terms of travel. I
20 know Devonia Betts normally does that. But she
21 entrusted Melissa and I to tag team if needed, to
22 walk you through the travel information.

1 So, if you could pull that information
2 out of your folder, there's some basic
3 information in there. And then the standalone
4 page that it is clipped to is your travel
5 reimbursement form.

6 So, we ask that you keep your
7 receipts, except for the meals. But, you know,
8 any parking receipts, taxis. Make sure you get
9 your receipt for the hotel. And submit all of
10 those receipts with this form to Devonia by the
11 26th, as it says at the very bottom.

12 Her email address is there. Her phone
13 number is at the bottom on Page 2, if you need to
14 contact her. Or, I know some folks have gone
15 through me. And I have forwarded information to
16 Devonia.

17 But if you fill all of that out and
18 submit all of your receipts, and get that to
19 Devonia, she will complete the voucher and email
20 back to you. Because I think you have to do some
21 kind of an electronic signature.

22 And once that gets returned back to

1 Devonia, then you should receive your
2 reimbursement within I think ten business days, I
3 believe she said. So, if you have any questions,
4 or need any walk through, the Betts ladies will
5 take care of it, either myself or Devonia. We
6 got you covered.

7 So, I know it's real quick. I think
8 it's very basic information that we need. Just
9 be sure to keep any receipts. And then we'll
10 circle back. And if you have any questions,
11 again, don't hesitate to let us know.

12 So, I think with that, that gets us to
13 what, public comment. Does anybody have anything
14 around the room? Or are there any comments that
15 need to be spoken? Okay. I guess, hearing none,
16 I guess at this point in time we turn it over to
17 Beth, who's your chairperson, to kind of chair
18 the meeting.

19 I don't see Ken here yet. So, I will
20 let Beth and Bob either introduce themselves, or
21 we can take a break. Or I will leave it in your
22 capable hands. But thank you so much. And if

1 you need anything I am here and at your service.

2 MS. KNORR: Thank you, Marlene and
3 Melissa. We really appreciate all the help that
4 you've given us since the fall meeting. And look
5 forward to the next couple of days working with
6 everybody.

7 I don't really have any comments to
8 start, other than to again thank everybody for
9 taking time out of your busy schedules to be
10 here, and to make recommendations and statements
11 to the Secretary. I really do hope that we can
12 formulate some recommendations that we can all
13 feel confident in over the next couple of days.

14 One think I would suggest with regards
15 to the agenda, is that tomorrow a lot of time is
16 set aside for working groups. So, I think
17 between now and then, give some consideration,
18 especially to new members, what committees you
19 want to participate in.

20 But also, if there are other
21 committees, or other areas that you're feeling
22 need to be discussed, give that some thought, so

1 that we can raise those as potential additional
2 committees, and start forming groups around those
3 to discuss recommendations and/or statements.

4 So, that's all I have. Bob, do you
5 have --

6 MR. NOLAN: No, I'm good. I'll yield
7 my time to the good of the order.

8 MS. KNORR: All right.

9 MS. BETTS: Okay. I don't think, Ken
10 Petersen is our first speaker out of the block.
11 So, why don't we take at least a ten, maybe 15
12 minute break. There's coffee, there's water. As
13 I said, the facilities are out in the hallway if
14 you need anything.

15 And when Ken gets here we'll get
16 things loaded up, and we'll get started. So,
17 thank you so much.

18 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
19 went off the record at 9:44 a.m. and resumed at
20 10:13 a.m.)

21 MS. BAILEY: Okay, this is Melissa,
22 we're going to get started in just a minute. If

1 you came in since the break and you have not
2 signed in, there is a guest sign-in sheet outside
3 the door. If you can please put that in your
4 affiliation, that would be helpful to us as we
5 keep the record of whose attended.

6 MS. BETTS: Okay, I guess with that we
7 will go ahead and get started working into the
8 Food Safety Agenda. And our first speaker is Ken
9 Petersen.

10 And he's going to give us a status of
11 the Global Food Safety Initiative. And so we'll
12 have Ken speak and answer any questions and we'll
13 kind of go from there. So, Ken, take it away.

14 MR. PETERSEN: Great, thank you very
15 much. I'm not used to standing at a podium here.

16 So as Marlene mentioned, I'm providing
17 an update on where we're at with the global food
18 safety initiative project. So certainly I've got
19 some news to share since the last advisory
20 committee, GFSIs made some decisions and is
21 moving forward with some different things.

22 So, just to give a quick background.

1 We have been engaged with GFSI over the past five
2 years, to gain some sort of recognition of the
3 USDA GAP&GHP Program.

4 And unfortunately, there were some
5 significant challenges for government owed
6 systems, due to the incompatibility of how
7 governments operate, versus what GFSI had in its
8 benchmarking requirements. And we just weren't
9 able to come to any resolution on resolving those
10 particular issues. But we certainly stayed
11 engaged with GFSI.

12 And really the marketplace has evolved
13 over the last several years. And GFSI has made a
14 concerted effort to reach out to governments, in
15 looking at ways that they can partner and
16 collaborate with government entities, in the
17 realm of food safety.

18 So back in June of 2015, as I had
19 reported at the last advisory committee meeting,
20 GFSI had developed a taskforce that was looking
21 at providing a recommendation back to the board
22 of directors, on a way to recognize government

1 based programs.

2 And really the impetus behind that was
3 the China HACCP Program. GFSI was trying to make
4 in-roads within China, and essentially China
5 said, you need to work with us or we're not going
6 to do anything with you. So that really kind of
7 kicked them into gear and, like I said, put the
8 taskforce together in developing that
9 recommendation.

10 In early 2006 that taskforce came out
11 with a draft of technical equivalence for
12 government certification programs. That was
13 shared with the Board.

14 They looked at a number of other
15 options as well. And they kind of took the tack
16 that they were going to incorporate those
17 requirements into the developing revision of
18 their benchmarking document, Version 7. Which is
19 what the schemes under GFSI have to abide by when
20 they go through the benchmarking process.

21 So that, unfortunately, took a lot
22 longer than they had originally anticipated. Due

1 to a number of different thing.

2 They were reaching out to FDA on
3 trying to align with some of the FSMA
4 requirements. They were working with the schemes
5 to try to make sure that they incorporated a lot
6 of the changes that they were looking for.

7 In particular, around primary
8 production. GFSI really got its start as a
9 manufacturing processing system and they tried to
10 kind of shoehorn in the primary production, which
11 in some cases didn't really work well.

12 So, they tried to make a concerted
13 effort to incorporate those requirements into
14 Version 7 as well.

15 So I'm pleased to say that in March,
16 at their annual conference in Houston, they
17 officially released Version 7. And have since
18 then released Version 7.1.

19 But in that Version 7, there is a
20 section on technical equivalence for government
21 certification programs. Which outlines what
22 government based systems need to do in order to

1 align with their requirements and go through the
2 technical equivalence process.

3 And really, the requirements are
4 similar to those used by the current
5 certification program owners. A little
6 vernacular here, I called them schemes a little
7 bit early, at March they changed it from schemes
8 because in North America scheme intends to be a
9 bad world, so they went to certification program
10 owners, which I'm still getting use to saying and
11 doesn't roll off the tongue.

12 So those requirements for technical
13 equivalence are similar to what the certification
14 program owners go through. The major difference
15 being that the technical equivalency only
16 assesses the governments food safety standard, it
17 does not address the operational management, the
18 governance of the certification program. Any of
19 the kind of the nuts and bolts portion of the
20 GFSI benchmarking process.

21 Because they realize that it's hard to
22 tell the government program how to run their

1 business.

2 There are regulations, there's laws
3 and things like that, that put a lot of what we
4 do in place. And those were some of the things
5 that we weren't able to overcome previously.

6 So again, it really just focuses on
7 the food safety standard. And for AMS, that's
8 going to be the produce GAPs harmonized food
9 safety standard.

10 The other big piece, with the
11 technical equivalence, is that buyers may choose
12 to recognize technical equivalence or not. It is
13 ultimately up to the buyer to determine whether
14 or not they want to take that technical
15 equivalence in lieu of a full certification under
16 one of the GFSIs benchmark schemes.

17 And we have been talking with a number
18 of the major buyers in the U.S. about whether or
19 not they would accept USDA technical equivalence.
20 And every indication that I got from Walmart,
21 Wegmans, you name it, that they are going to be
22 accepting the technical equivalence through the

1 USDA.

2 Matter of fact, I've got a meeting in
3 two weeks with Costco to talk to them about
4 recognizing the technical equivalence as well.

5 So really looking at next steps, we're
6 in the process of performing a GAPS analysis of
7 the food safety requirements within Version 7.1
8 of the benchmarking document. In making sure
9 that the harmonized standard aligns with those
10 requirements.

11 We have identified a couple of areas
12 where the harmonized standard doesn't quite go
13 far enough or doesn't explicitly address those
14 particular issues. Especially around the areas
15 of food fraud and food defense.

16 So those are things that we got to
17 look at on how we're going to incorporate those
18 into the USDA harmonized standard audit that
19 we'll be offering. So we're doing that GAPS
20 analysis, we're going to then identify a plan on
21 how we're going to address those, as well as a
22 timeline for potential implementation of those

1 changes.

2 Ultimately that will be run up through
3 the program, to the agency, when the agency is
4 fully staffed with the appropriate level
5 administrator and everything, to get the sign off
6 on moving forward. We can then submit an
7 application to GFSI to go through the technical
8 equivalence process.

9 So the steps, and these are kind of
10 high level steps, we would submit a formal
11 application to the GFSI. At that point, they
12 would post our application on their website for
13 public consultation.

14 It's up for 30 days and really anybody
15 has the opportunity to comment on the
16 applicability of accepting that application,
17 within the GFSI system. AMS would need to sign
18 an MoU with GFSI that outlines the terms of
19 technical equivalence, of how it's used, that
20 kind of thing.

21 GFSI then convenes an expert panel
22 that reviews the application and essentially goes

1 through and looks at it line-by-line. What's the
2 GFSI food safety requirements, how does our
3 standard meet those requirements.

4 They then get back with us and give us
5 an opportunity for corrections. Based on that
6 analysis and that review, we have the opportunity
7 then to provide additional documentation to make
8 our case on why we think it aligns.

9 Or in the case that it may not align,
10 we have the opportunity to make changes, in order
11 to get it aligned. Go through that review
12 process again.

13 And then ultimately, that expert panel
14 will make a recommendation to the GFSI board of
15 directors on whether or not to accept that
16 application.

17 So that's where we're at with the GFSI
18 process. Again, we're excited. This has been a
19 long time coming and a log slog.

20 I know Lorenzo and Chip, at times,
21 have kind of questioned whether or not this has
22 been worth the effort as we've gone along in the

1 process, but ultimately, I think, with the
2 industry support and certainly the support of the
3 Advisory Committee over the last couple years to
4 keep this moving, I think the goal is within
5 sight and we're going to be able to do this.

6 So with that, I'll open it up to
7 questions. Yes.

8 MS. ELLOR: Tina Ellor. So was it
9 your impression that the large buyers will wait
10 for this process to go through before they start
11 accepting the GAP or will some of them, based on
12 your interactions with them, go ahead and start
13 accepting the GAP --

14 MR. PETERSEN: Yes. So certainly,
15 many of them already accept a USDA GAP audits,
16 under certain conditions. Generally it's in
17 their small developing supplier program where
18 they'll take that, our audit.

19 Some will take it for what they would
20 consider low risk commodities. If it's a fresh
21 cut salad facility they're going to look for a
22 GFSI audit, but if it's a whole potato or a whole

1 onion or something like that, they've made the
2 decision that our audit is acceptable for their
3 purposes.

4 So again, we've worked with Walmart,
5 with Target with Aldi's, Wegmans, Cisco. There's
6 a number of the big national and regional buyers
7 that we've, over the years, cultivated
8 relationships with in recognizing our program.

9 And many of them are also now on the
10 GFSI board of directors and have been supportive
11 of us getting this technical equivalency so that
12 they can accept our audit for more than just what
13 they're currently utilizing it for.

14 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Ken, Roland
15 McReynolds. You mentioned food defense as one of
16 the things where there's a potential kind of GAP
17 analysis there. And it's also one of the things
18 that, from a farmers' perspective, is perhaps the
19 least applicable about GFSI to their operations
20 because it's unlikely the terrorists will come
21 out to Fayetteville, Tennessee to poison anyone's
22 crops.

1 So any, I mean, obviously you're early
2 in the process, but any insights on how you'll go
3 about that analysis, how you'll kind of work with
4 industry to come up with appropriate ways to
5 handle those GAPS?

6 MR. PETERSEN: Certainly. Thank you,
7 McReynolds.

8 So currently we do offer a food
9 defense audit that is used at the farm level.
10 And you're right, I mean, when you look at food
11 defense, you've got this big open field, how are
12 you possibly going to protect that.

13 So really, for farming operations,
14 production operations, when we look at food
15 defense, we tend to look at things that are
16 within your control. You know, if you've got a
17 packing house, if you've got facilities where
18 you're storing your chemicals and other types of
19 things, to ensure that those are being protected.

20 And ultimately, it's not just a
21 terrorist, it also could be a disgruntled
22 employee that is an insider that could

1 potentially do harm. So what are your controls
2 on the farm to ensure that you're taking that
3 into consideration as well.

4 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Thank you.

5 MR. NOLAN: Ken, I have a question.
6 Bob Nolan. It's not really on this topic, but
7 group GAP, I think you're the guy for group GAP.
8 Can you just give me a quick explanation, a quick
9 overview of what that is and how that works?

10 MR. PETERSEN: Certainly. So as many
11 of you are aware, last April of 2016, we formally
12 launched the group GAP certification program.
13 Which really is just an extension of GAP
14 certification.

15 I just looks very specifically at, as
16 opposed to single farm getting a GAP audit, it' a
17 group of farms that undergo certification.

18 And the way it works is that there is
19 some sort of a central entity. Whether it's a,
20 it could be a food hub, it could be a
21 cooperative. There is really any number of
22 central entities that could be considered the

1 manager of the group.

2 But then that central entity then
3 develops a quality management system on how they
4 want their group to work, how their producers
5 will comply with food safety requirements. And
6 again, using one of the standards that USDA
7 audits do.

8 And as well as the requirements for
9 their internal auditors, verification that their
10 internal auditors are properly trained, meet our
11 requirements. And then the application of that
12 food safety standard on all the growers.

13 How the group is going to handle
14 nonconforming product, members that may not
15 comply to the food safety requirements. You
16 know, it's a pretty comprehensive quality
17 management system that they develop.

18 So then the group does internal audits
19 of all of its members to verify conformance to
20 the food safety standard. And then we come in
21 and audit the group.

22 So we look at their QMS. Are they

1 doing what they said they were going to do in
2 their QMS, are they meeting the requirements that
3 we've set forward in the group GAP certification
4 requirements. If there are nonconformances, how
5 are they addressing those nonconformances.

6 And then we go out and look at the
7 square root of the number of growers in the
8 group. So if there's a hundred growers in the
9 group, we go out and spot check and look at ten
10 of those growers.

11 Again, it's to verify that those
12 growers are adhering. Also, to look at how those
13 internal auditors apply the standard to ensure
14 that it's being applied properly.

15 We use our audits and compare it to
16 the audit that internal auditor did as a kind of
17 a check and balance to verify that they're doing
18 their job properly. But then ultimately, if they
19 meet all of our requirements and do everything
20 that they need to, then we would issue
21 certification to the group.

22 So last year we had eight groups that

1 applied -- underwent certification. We issued
2 certification to seven of the eight.

3 MS. HERRON: I just have a follow-up
4 to that. Johanna Herron.

5 So in your situations where you're
6 looking at groups or pockets in communities that
7 are so small, that they have maybe five growers
8 in a food hub, I assume you didn't, are you
9 inspecting one or is there a threshold that a
10 minimum is just not worth it for group GAP?

11 MR. PETERSEN: So that's a great
12 question, and it's something that we've been
13 working with groups on. We don't limit the size.

14 I mean, if it's a group of five and
15 they want to undergo group certification, they
16 certainly can do so.

17 We certainly share with them some of
18 the research that's done by some of the external
19 certification programs and the Wallace center and
20 others, that kind of show that breakeven point of
21 how many growers you need a group to really
22 offset the costs of developing the group and

1 going through the training and everything else
2 that's associated with that.

3 And that number, it depends on which
4 study you look at, but that number is somewhere
5 between 20 and 30. Again, just depending on the
6 size and complexity of the group.

7 So those smaller groups, it is a much
8 longer return on investment that you're looking
9 at. As far as the up-front costs and developing
10 the program and everything.

11 (Off microphone comment.)

12 MS. KNORR: Sure, but could you come
13 up to the mic please?

14 MS. WASSERMAN: Have you ever run
15 across the issue, it's more of a legal type
16 question, but when the government would be
17 competing with the private auditors, is that ever
18 an issue?

19 MR. PETERSEN: Well --

20 MS. KNORR: Sorry, can you just please
21 introduce yourself?

22 MS. WASSERMAN: I'm sorry. Jessica

1 Wasserman, Wasserman & Associates.

2 MR. PETERSEN: Yes. So our program is
3 offered on a voluntary user fee basis. So
4 growers are free to choice to utilize us or other
5 private certification bodies that are out there.

6 You know, ultimately, yes, it's a
7 decision by the grower. And in looking at what
8 typically their buyers are asking them to do.

9 There are some buyers out there that
10 don't accept our audits, so the growers then
11 would use one of the approved certification
12 bodies that that buyer has put in place.

13 But we got into this space, originally
14 back in the early 2000's, at the specific request
15 of the industry. Because they valued our
16 impartiality and the ability to provide this
17 service.

18 MS. WASSERMAN: Yes, maybe. It's just
19 an odd coincidence that I represented when I was
20 at a law firm, into it. This was a number of
21 years ago and they were in the tax business, you
22 know. Tax.

1 And when the government got into, the
2 IRS, got into that same business, there was a
3 huge kerfuffle about all of it. And so it just
4 reminds me of that. But maybe it's different
5 because voluntary. I'd have to think it through.
6 But anyway --

7 MR. PETERSEN: Yes.

8 MS. WASSERMAN: -- thank you very
9 much.

10 MR. PETERSEN: You're welcome. I
11 think, Roland.

12 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Sure. Ken, this is
13 always not subject of your presentation, but to
14 follow-up on the new audit fees, which we made a
15 recommendation in the past about recovery of cost
16 and that sort of thing, so maybe that was up, I
17 didn't see that listed as something you'll talk
18 about, but if that's what you're going to talk
19 about, then tallyho.

20 (Laughter.)

21 MR. PETERSEN: Just that I am an Eagle
22 Scout so I am prepared. So certainly, as I think

1 --

2 MR. MCREYNOLDS: I'm sorry --

3 MS. KNORR: Hold on one --

4 MR. MCREYNOLDS: -- if I'm skipping
5 around and, if we have --

6 MS. KNORR: -- second, before you get
7 into --

8 MR. PETERSEN: Yes.

9 MS. KNORR: -- I think Tina wanted to
10 do --

11 MR. PETERSEN: Okay.

12 MS. KNORR: -- GFSI before you get
13 into the --

14 MR. PETERSEN: Yes.

15 MS. ELLOR: This is my third year on
16 the committee and I think for the first two years
17 we did have recommendations surrounding the USDA
18 being more of an advocate for your food safety,
19 I'll call it a scheme because I can't remember
20 what that was --

21 MR. PETERSEN: Yes. Certification
22 program owners.

1 MS. ELLOR: -- certification program
2 owners.

3 MR. PETERSEN: Yes.

4 MS. ELLOR: So, it sounds like, going
5 out to see those large buyers, that you're really
6 fulfilling some of that original intention and
7 recommendations of this group. So is that part
8 of what you're doing?

9 MR. PETERSEN: Certainly, yes. I
10 mean, a lot of my time is actually devoted to
11 outreach and on the phone with buyers. Whether
12 it's on the phone, whether it's at meetings that
13 I'm at. Talking with the buyers if they come
14 into D.C., being able to sit down and talk with
15 them.

16 But we, again, the grower community
17 asked us to do that. You have asked us to do
18 that. So we want to make sure that our services
19 fulfill the need of the industry. Because that's
20 ultimately what we're here for is to facilitate
21 marketing of products.

22 All right, so I'll take just a couple

1 of seconds to go through the financial update.
2 And again, I kind of thought this was coming so I
3 put together just a few slides.

4 So as Roland mentioned, back in
5 September of 2015, this committee made a very
6 specific recommendation to the Secretary that we
7 needed to setup a fee structure that allowed us
8 to recover the cost of providing this service.
9 Because up to this point we have not.

10 So looking at the AMS fee formula that
11 was published in November of 2011, the agency did
12 an analysis in the Federal Registry Notice, that
13 came out yesterday and today, the hourly rate for
14 audit services is going up to \$108 an hour. It
15 was \$92. So it's about a 17 percent increase.
16 That will go into effect on October 1st of this
17 year.

18 The other piece that we have talked to
19 you about, over the last year, is part of our
20 challenge is that, particularly with our
21 fed/state partners, when the state employees go
22 out and do audits on our behalf, they charge for

1 their time and expenses to do that audit, but
2 they don't charge for my staff's time in the
3 audit process. You know, reviewing the audit,
4 making certification decision, posting the
5 information on the web, issuing a certificate and
6 all that outreach and everything that we just
7 talked about.

8 So we are going to be working with our
9 states here over the next month and letting them
10 know that we plan to implement a four hour charge
11 that covers all of those activities that I just
12 mentioned, in addition to any of the pre-audit
13 and onsite activities that are happening.

14 And by doing so, that allows us to
15 completely recover the cost of providing this
16 service, so that we can remain a viable option to
17 the industry. Because ultimately without this,
18 we couldn't continue to sustain the losses that
19 we were incurring, to manage and run this
20 program.

21 MR. MCREYNOLDS: And so that's a \$432
22 fee that will be in addition to the 17 percent

1 increase?

2 MR. PETERSEN: Yes.

3 MR. MCREYNOLDS: That farmers will
4 pay.

5 MR. PETERSEN: Yes.

6 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Okay. That wasn't as
7 clear from the materials that were shared with us
8 before. Thanks for -- that's a lot. That's a
9 big jump.

10 MR. PETERSEN: Yes. We've incurred
11 close to a million dollars in loses each of the
12 last three years. So in order to make that up,
13 this is the number that we need to collect in
14 order to recover those costs.

15 We looked at this the last two, three,
16 four years. And no matter which way we ran the
17 math, it basically, this is the number.

18 You know, we work with our states.
19 After our meeting with our states back in
20 December, we formed a technical advisory group
21 that was made up with representatives from AMS,
22 special crops program and 12 of our state

1 partners that are heavily involved in auditing.

2 And again, we looked at the numbers,
3 we looked at a number of different options that
4 we could consider. But ultimately it came down
5 to this was the only way that we could make this
6 work, within the scope of the fee structure that
7 we operate in.

8 MR. MCREYNOLDS: This is Roland. So
9 in our area, typically its about \$900 to \$1,000.
10 Now we're talking about \$1,500 to \$1,600. A 50
11 or 60 percent increase.

12 That's pretty substantial, especially
13 for the smaller scale producers who've been
14 trying to take advantage of the program.

15 MR. PETERSEN: Yes. So one of the
16 things that we'll be doing, in working with our
17 states is, certainly we can't dictate to the
18 states what they do, but encouraging states
19 through specialty crop block grants or other
20 types of cost share programs, to implement some
21 changes.

22 There's a number of other types of

1 groups that are outside of AMS, are looking at
2 potential ways that they could find sources of
3 cost share money and things like that, to help
4 offset the burden, to the small producer.

5 But ultimately from our perspective,
6 on the back-end, when we receive an audit, it
7 generally takes the same amount of time for us to
8 process an audit of a one acre as it does a
9 thousand-acre farm. We've got some pretty set
10 fixed costs on our side.

11 So again, this was really the only way
12 that we could make the math work to be able to
13 keep this program viable and operating.

14 Any other questions? All right.
15 Well, thank you very much.

16 MS. BETTS: Thanks, Ken.

17 (Applause.)

18 MS. BETTS: Go ahead, Melissa.

19 MS. BAILEY: This is Melissa. I
20 noted, between the break and now, we've had a
21 number of new visitors that came in the room. So
22 for those who have not introduced themselves

1 previously, so we're not going to go around the
2 table here, but for those that did arrive, if you
3 could just go around the room and have folks
4 speak into the mic and introduce who they are.

5 There is a mic at the end of the table
6 or there is mine right here that you can use.

7 Thanks.

8 MR. MERRILL: Yes, I'm Maximilian
9 Merrill with the National Farm to School Network.

10 MS. GREETHER: Erin Grether with the
11 United Fresh.

12 MR. MINOR: Hi, my name is Travis
13 Minor, I'm with USDA's Economic Research Service.

14 MR. ASSAR: Good morning, my name is
15 Samir Assar. I am the director for the Division
16 of Produce Safety at FDA.

17 MS. THOMPSON: Good morning, my name
18 is Kimberly Thompson, I'm here with Food
19 Directions.

20 MS. CARLSON: My name is Jan Carlson,
21 I'm with CFSAN at FDA.

22 MS. KOVACS: Hi, I'm Tricia Kovacs

1 with USDA and you'll hear from me shortly.

2 MR. TRIBBETT: Lorenzo Tribbett,
3 director of Specialty Crops Inspection Division.

4 MR. TAYLOR: Good morning, Chip
5 Taylor, associate director of operations,
6 Specialty Crop Inspections, USDA.

7 MS. BETTS: Okay, I think with that,
8 Samir, if you're ready, the floor is yours.

9 MR. ASSAR: Good morning, again. I
10 think this is the third time I've had the
11 opportunity to talk to the advisory committee. I
12 appreciate another opportunity.

13 And I'm here to talk about the produce
14 safety rule and kind of where we are now and
15 generally where we're going.

16 I think a lot of you are in-tune with
17 some of the press that's come out with respect to
18 the rule. Hopefully a lot of you are hooked into
19 our Listserv, our Food Safety Modernization Act
20 Listserv.

21 Through that Listserv you can get
22 regular updates on our progress on various

1 things. I would encourage you to sign up for
2 that Listserv if you're not already signed up for
3 it.

4 So where we are now. We issued the
5 rule, as you know a few years ago, and our first
6 compliance date hit with respect to sprout
7 production or sprout requirements, that sprouters
8 are subject to.

9 And before that first compliance date,
10 we issued a draft sprout safe guidance, that is
11 currently open for comment. And we've received a
12 number of comments to that guidance so far.

13 The sprout guidance is very much heavy
14 on the sprout section of the produce safety rule.
15 And although sprouters are also subject to other
16 areas of the rule as well.

17 In addition to this guidance, we have
18 a compliance and implementation guidance that's
19 in the queue for other produce besides sprouts.
20 And we're aiming to issue that guidance, ahead of
21 the first compliance date that's associated with
22 other produce, if you will. Which will be coming

1 up in January '18.

2 Now, most of you have probably heard
3 that we are reconsidering or considering
4 revisiting water, based on some visits that we
5 did after the final rule. We also, through other
6 engagements, such as meetings that were held that
7 we were part of, we had heard concerns about the
8 water requirements and the burden that growers
9 would face in implementing the water
10 requirements.

11 So we're carefully looking at those
12 water requirements and considering whether or not
13 to revise the watering requirements based on the
14 concerns that we've heard.

15 And I would say some of the top
16 concerns are around the methods that were
17 included in the final rule. And the fact that a
18 lab, some labs are not able, a lot of labs are
19 not able to accommodate that method. So we're
20 looking at that.

21 Also, the sampling regime that's
22 associated with the produce safety rule. The

1 frequency of sampling.

2 And tailored or around the issue of
3 that growers can have multiple water sources.
4 And in order to develop a water quality profile,
5 as the rule is written, the profile would need to
6 be representative of the water that's used. So
7 there is a lack of clarity about what that means
8 exactly.

9 Does that mean that you need to
10 collect water samples for every single water
11 source that you may use on your farm? And we've
12 heard cases where there are, you know, we've even
13 heard cases that there are hundreds of water
14 sources that farmers could utilize on one farm.
15 So we're looking at that.

16 Also, with respect to the complexities
17 associated with calculating the geometric mean,
18 which is one of the criteria. The other criteria
19 is the statistical threshold value that's aimed
20 at measuring the variability in your water
21 source.

22 There were concerns that this would

1 not be a straightforward calculation for farmers
2 to do.

3 So, again, looking at how all of that
4 can be readdressed. Moving forward, whether it's
5 readdressed through more specific guidance or
6 detailed guidance, exploring the flexibility
7 that's in our rule or possibly going through
8 rulemaking and putting forth a new set of
9 proposed requirements. Water requirements.

10 And those proposed requirements would
11 be open for comment as well. So it's not like we
12 would jump right into a final rule.

13 So one of the, we recognize that
14 compliance dates associated with, even for water,
15 even though there's a delayed set of compliance
16 dates associated with the water requirements,
17 those dates are fast approaching and growers want
18 to know, what can I do now? What can I do now?

19 And we recognize that. And so we
20 recognize that it will take some time to think
21 through what we need to think through to revise
22 the water requirements. Along with that, we

1 understand that growers want to know what they
2 need to do.

3 So that will also be considered as our
4 approach rolls out. And I would just say, stayed
5 tune.

6 And again, the FSMA Listserv will be
7 a valuable resource to get an update on our
8 progress, with respect to any developments with
9 respect to water.

10 We are, throughout this process, I've
11 mentioned the methods issue, and throughout this
12 process we've understood that there are
13 stakeholders out there that are meeting on a
14 regular basis. And we had the opportunity to
15 participate in meetings around water.

16 There was one meeting that was held by
17 the Center for Produce Safety a month ago, or so,
18 maybe a month and a half ago, to talk about the
19 methods issue. And again, the complexities
20 associated with methods.

21 And one the purposes of the meeting
22 was to determine whether or not further research

1 is needed to provide more options for growers to
2 use to comply with the rule as it currently is.

3 And again, we were there at the table
4 to provide technical assistance. It was a very
5 fruitful engagement.

6 They of course, CPS hosted the
7 conference, and we look forward to any products
8 that are generated through that forum. And of
9 course, that will be valuable information, as any
10 information is that is emerging on this topic, as
11 we consider rulemaking.

12 So as we're, talked a little bit about
13 compliance dates and guidance and rulemaking, I
14 want to get into, while we're doing all of this
15 work, we're also moving forward with developing
16 strategies for implementing the produce safety
17 rule. This is as important as the rulemaking
18 itself. As the rule, itself.

19 How is this going to play out, what
20 are the enforcement strategies, how are we going
21 to view this deviation, if you will, or this
22 factor versus the other factor in terms of what

1 we might find out on the farm.

2 And so that's all being strategize and
3 developed. And we have a cooperative agreement
4 with the National Association for the State
5 Departments of Agriculture, to help us develop
6 implementation strategies around the produce
7 safety rule. We meet on a regular basis.

8 And so, again, we are committed to
9 making sure that, as we move forward with
10 implementing the rule, that it's done in a right,
11 in a proper way, that accounts for the diversity
12 and the multiple factors that need to be
13 accounted for in developing such approaches.

14 We have started to move forward with
15 some of the strategies that have been developed
16 through this workgroup. One of the areas that
17 we've implemented is that we formed a produce
18 safety network.

19 And this network is comprised of 18
20 members that include field staff, as well as
21 staff that would do, provide technical assistance
22 to the community in complying or supporting

1 compliance with the produce safety rule.

2 And so the field staff would be more
3 focused on investigations and would primarily
4 focus on the foreign arena in doing inspections
5 of a foreign production areas, whereas the
6 subject matter experts, or the technical experts,
7 would be participating in various meetings that
8 are held throughout the regions. These are set
9 up as regional PSNs, so they're housed throughout
10 various regions within the U.S.

11 And the goal is for them to be in-tune
12 with the on goings, with respect to produce
13 safety within those regions, identify the needs
14 through meetings/discussions forum, and then
15 raise those needs to a higher level so that those
16 needs can be addressed through our policy making,
17 through our educational efforts, research, all of
18 the tools that we have to address the needs out
19 there.

20 And so we're really excited about
21 that. There's a lot of great relationships that
22 are already forming through the produce safety

1 network.

2 They've done a good job of, first,
3 connecting with the state authorities, also
4 cooperative extension that exists within those
5 regions. And they're starting to extend beyond
6 and really connect with the industry in those
7 regions as well.

8 And this again, is all about
9 supporting compliance with the produce safety
10 rule. And we've always said that that's our
11 first focus, is educating before and while we
12 regulate.

13 We don't want to, and it's not
14 appropriate for us to go out with a regulatory
15 hammer on this. We want to help growers comply
16 with the produce safety rule.

17 And we've dedicated also resources in
18 that regard. Not only with respect to forming
19 these PSN, but also in the various education and
20 training cooperative agreements that we've also
21 instituted.

22 And some of you may know about these

1 cooperative agreements. We are working with USDA
2 to address the needs that are out there.

3 And we understand, just like with
4 rulemaking, that one size does not fit all.
5 Training is also another situation where one size
6 does not fit all.

7 So, we've developed cooperative
8 agreements with entities that can educate target
9 audiences that have special requirements or
10 special needs, that are not part of the normal
11 training regime. They're just a different target
12 audience. There are cultural differences, there
13 are regional differences.

14 And those we understand should be
15 accommodated in training. Moving forward with
16 training.

17 I won't get into that a whole lot
18 because I know you'll hear from Tricia about
19 that. And she's heavily involved in what we're
20 doing on training, with respect to working on a
21 collaborative food safety, FSMA food safety
22 training forum. And she's one of the chairs for

1 that.

2 But we're really excited about how all
3 of that is ramping up. Primarily the education
4 training groups that we've provided funds to, are
5 still working on setting up infrastructure to do
6 training.

7 I would say for the most part that's
8 what they're doing. And hopefully within the
9 next few months there will be more conversation
10 over to actual training.

11 Training that is happening currently
12 is being done through the produce safety
13 alliance. And they've made a lot of progress in
14 the number of training the trainers that they've
15 done. And obviously they train the trainers,
16 lead to grower trainings, all throughout the U.S.

17 There have been about 26 train to
18 trainer sessions and 110 grower trainings held.
19 And now there almost 827 trainers and close to
20 100 certified lead trainers that are able to do
21 training, all throughout the U.S., and abroad as
22 well. We've got some trainers that are from

1 international communities that are doing
2 trainings as well.

3 So we're really excited about the
4 progress that's going on through the PSA. The
5 Produce Safety Alliance.

6 And so I'll just quick close about
7 another very important implementation aspect that
8 we're undergoing currently. Which is consistent
9 what we've said, again, from the very get go of
10 working on a regulation.

11 You know, we can't do it on our own.
12 We know that there is an existing landscape out
13 there. We need to work with an existing
14 landscape to make all of this happen.

15 And we know that the states have a lot
16 of institutional knowledge on produce safety.
17 And we've setup cooperative agreements with 42
18 different states to utilize their ability to have
19 more of an on ground, or a closed presence, to
20 the farming community that they serve actually.

21 And so we've provided funds to these
22 states to do inspections and education. And for

1 the most part, so those funds currently are being
2 dedicated to infrastructure development as well.
3 Currently.

4 And then in the next year there will
5 be more work towards actually getting to do
6 education and some of the things that need to be
7 done as part of the Corps of the cooperative
8 agreements. And eventually they will be doing
9 inspections as well.

10 We're going to be relying on them to
11 be doing inspections. And we're, domestically,
12 we are only going to inspect under for cause
13 situations, or situations that involved an
14 imminent public health concern, or if in the case
15 that a state doesn't want to do their own
16 inspection or we don't have a cooperative
17 agreement, in those cases we might do inspections
18 as well. Our staff would do inspections. FDA
19 staff.

20 But we really want to rely on the
21 states. We've provided a lot of funds, we're
22 working with them to make sure that inspections,

1 and anything that they do, is consistent and
2 uniform.

3 The goal of the rule is a level
4 playing field that includes our domestic arena as
5 well as international. It's across the board.

6 We want to establish a level playing
7 field. And a consistency and uniformity with
8 respect to how this program rolls out is
9 critical. We get that.

10 So that is my talk. Are there any
11 questions? Yes, Dan.

12 MS. HERRON: Johanna Herron. Oh,
13 sorry. Go ahead.

14 I was just curious if you had an
15 update on the financials? I know that I had
16 heard, or thought I heard somewhere that, for the
17 cooperative agreements, that you may not have the
18 funds there for both regulatory competition A and
19 B moving forward. I'm just wondering if you have
20 an update on that?

21 MR. ASSAR: I don't have an update
22 that I can share at this moment. Sorry.

1 MR. SUTTON: Dan Sutton. Can you, and
2 your best guess would be fine, but what kind of
3 timeline are we looking at for some type of
4 closer to final guidance on the water issue?

5 I know there's a lot to look at. I
6 mean, I --

7 MR. ASSAR: Yes.

8 MR. SUTTON: -- and I guess, I'm
9 asking for your best guess.

10 MR. ASSAR: Yes.

11 MR. SUTTON: Is it three months, six
12 months, a year, when do you think there will be
13 some conclusion to all that?

14 MR. ASSAR: And I definitely
15 appreciate that question. And I understand the
16 concern.

17 We're kind of in an awkward state
18 right now. And it's all of us, quite frankly.
19 We're looking through the water requirements,
20 we're developing options.

21 We want to make a decision, the
22 appropriate decision, as quickly as possible, to

1 get that information out there. So, growers know
2 what they need to do to move forward. I mean,
3 that's really what they're looking for at this
4 point.

5 And so I'll just say that, if we were
6 to go through the rulemaking process, I hate to
7 put it like this, but we can control we can
8 control. Meaning, FDA can control what we can
9 control.

10 And our timelines are maybe, you know,
11 even if we included an ambitious timeline, we're
12 just not certain that we could move forward with
13 that timeline. Just given the other clearances
14 that need to happen before something would issue
15 through the CFR.

16 So it's tough to say. I can tell you
17 one thing, we are absolutely taking this very
18 seriously. We want to make this work.

19 And we are working very hard. I have
20 a staff that's, I mean, every single day we're
21 working through this issue and we're trying. We
22 want to get it resolved as quickly as possible to

1 kind of figure out a way to move forward on
2 water.

3 And so I would, again, stay tuned.
4 Because there's a lot that's around water. Not
5 just the requirements, there is compliance dates
6 and so forth. So just, I would definitely stay
7 tuned.

8 And hopefully soon we will have
9 something for you to work with. I apologize
10 though. Yes.

11 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Roland McReynolds.
12 Samir, thanks very much for being here with us
13 and taking through all this.

14 MR. ASSAR: Certainly.

15 MR. MCREYNOLDS: A couple of
16 questions, if you'll permit. First, on the
17 water.

18 In terms of the issues that you
19 highlighted --

20 MR. ASSAR: Yes.

21 MR. MCREYNOLDS: -- that you're
22 looking at, you talked about the issue of the

1 complexity of calculating the geometric mean and
2 the statistical threshold value, but what about
3 the actual benchmarks for those, is that part of
4 the analysis as well?

5 MR. ASSAR: We are looking that as
6 well. The actual criteria is what we call it in
7 the rule. The values, yes.

8 And we've received a lot of comments
9 during the rulemaking process. And there were
10 other considerations that came about after the
11 final rule was issued. And so we are taking a
12 look at, I would say across the board, the water
13 requirements.

14 There's nothing in that set of
15 requirements that we're not looking at very
16 carefully.

17 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Terrific. Thanks for
18 that clarification.

19 The other piece, or question I had, in
20 terms of implementation. And your work in the
21 cooperative agreements right now, with the
22 states, as far as their development of these

1 foreign inventories.

2 MR. ASSAR: Yes.

3 MR. MCREYNOLDS: The information that
4 you're asking the states to collect, and share
5 with FDA, I mean, it goes to the level of dollar
6 value of sales of crops grown, of markets into
7 which people sell and to actually, I mean, it's
8 like the senses of agriculture in terms of its
9 scope.

10 So it's more than just name and place
11 of the farm. You know, people fill out their ag
12 census knowing that there is confidentiality in
13 protecting that. But this is going to FDA for
14 your all sort of big list of farms.

15 So it's, I would say there probably
16 would be some concern, from the farming
17 community, about the scope of what's being
18 requested, to be supplied to FDA. Can you
19 comment on how that process is developed?

20 MR. ASSAR: Yes. So, as you point
21 out, one of the elements that needs to be
22 achieved, through the cooperative agreement, is

1 to develop a farm inventory. And for a variety
2 of reasons.

3 And the level of detail is not
4 actually specified within the cooperative
5 agreement, it's just, you know, there are needs
6 that the states have themselves to be able to
7 implement the inspection or education programs.
8 And that's based on their kind of vision or view
9 on how to move forward with implementation of the
10 rule.

11 So we recognize the need, just
12 broadly, to have some semblance of, what are the
13 farms that are out there. And that's not only
14 for purposes of inspections, it's also for
15 purposes of understanding how to dedicate our
16 educational training resources as well.

17 But in terms of moving forward with
18 inspections, by the states in this case, since
19 these are states that are asking for this
20 information or looking for this information,
21 they're looking for a level of information that
22 will allow them to dedicate their resources to

1 where they need to focus their inspectional
2 efforts.

3 They want to ensure that they're not
4 focusing on farms that are exempt or not covered
5 by the produce safety rule. They want to make
6 sure that they target those that are covered by
7 commodity or other. So yes.

8 MR. MCREYNOLDS: So it's the states
9 that have been asking to collect this level of
10 detail?

11 MR. ASSAR: Well, there's flexibility
12 in the cooperative agreement, from FDA, as to the
13 level of information that would be needed to
14 satisfy the cooperative agreement. And the
15 states can, they each are handling it in a
16 different way.

17 I mean it's, there is some, you know,
18 we want to institute uniformity and consistency,
19 but some states are looking for information that
20 other states are not looking for.

21 And I would just say that we're still
22 kind of in the early discussions on farm

1 inventory with the states, through the
2 cooperative agreement. And we're going to be
3 working with them on what they've obtained so
4 far.

5 I don't know about any specific
6 requests that have been made by the states, to
7 fill out their farm inventory obligation, but
8 that's something that I can, I will find out as
9 we move forward with this cooperative agreement.

10 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Yes, I think that
11 would be very much appreciated.

12 MR. ASSAR: Yes.

13 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Because certainly the
14 impression I'm getting from states, is that they
15 are having to move forward and implement. And
16 the cooperative agreement is, their outreach
17 people are now being charged to start coming up
18 with this list --

19 MR. ASSAR: They do. They do, yes.

20 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Yes.

21 MR. ASSAR: That is true. Yes.

22 MR. MCREYNOLDS: So for them to be

1 capturing data about acres of production and
2 particular practices and dollar value of sales,
3 you know, sensitive information for --

4 MR. ASSAR: Right.

5 MR. MCREYNOLDS: -- individual farms,
6 it puts them in an interesting position to be out
7 there in people's fields and asking for this.

8 MR. ASSAR: Yes. No, I definitely
9 understand that.

10 MS. HERRON: Just a follow-up or
11 clarification. Johanna Herron.

12 So, 99 percent of the growers in my
13 state will probably fall into the qualified
14 exempt, and that puts the two, or however few
15 that is, at a very clear, clearly everyone in
16 Alaska knows who they are, and we do not export
17 any covered commodities from our state. I guess,
18 could you speak to, with the farm inventory then,
19 if they're qualified exempt, does that mean that
20 they do not need, we do not need to collect the
21 farm inventory information on that, just the
22 covered farms?

1 MR. ASSAR: So, and again, and this is
2 a discussion that we're having currently with the
3 states, in terms of what exactly they're
4 collecting and what needs to be collected or
5 what, I guess, what their vision is for
6 collecting information or what would be useful to
7 them and what will satisfy the cooperative
8 agreement, I can't say definitively.

9 You would need to know, have some
10 understanding of whether or not the farm is
11 exempt or not, right. It meets that qualified
12 exemption.

13 So if there was information outside of
14 like farm inventory information that could
15 support that so and so many farms are qualified
16 exempt, then perhaps that would, there would be
17 no need to collect their farm inventory. But I
18 can't speak to the specifics on that.

19 MS. HERRON: So if they don't export
20 outside of the state, then that would be one,
21 correct?

22 MR. ASSAR: Actually, the rule does

1 cover intra-state commerce.

2 MS. HERRON: Within 275 miles?

3 MR. ASSAR: Actually, even --

4 (Off microphone comment.)

5 MR. ASSAR: Yes. So there is the
6 exemption that you're talking about, within 275
7 miles, but outside of that, if there is a farm
8 that is of a greater size than the exemption, and
9 they're doing intra-state commerce, then they are
10 subject to the produce safety rule.

11 There is no intra-state, like flat out
12 across the board intra-state exemption. We do
13 have intra-state authority on produce.

14 MS. HERRON: Okay, thank you.

15 MR. ASSAR: Yes.

16 MS. ELLOR: Tina Ellor. So, from the
17 FDA's point of view, what is the minimum, or what
18 is the requirement that you have for cooperating
19 states? What's a requirement for the information
20 they need? What do you ask them for?

21 MR. ASSAR: So it's a very --

22 MS. ELLOR: The minimum.

1 MR. ASSAR: So we discuss, in the
2 cooperative agreement itself, that farm inventory
3 information needs to be collected.

4 MS. ELLOR: And what would that, would
5 that just be the name of the farmer and the
6 address?

7 MR. ASSAR: I'd have to go back and
8 look exactly how else we described that
9 particular item in the cooperative agreement, but
10 it's a very, very high level.

11 And it's up to, the next step is for
12 the state to determine, they do a needs
13 assessment, they determine what is the farm
14 inventory information that they need to carry out
15 their cooperative agreement, to do inspections
16 and education and so forth.

17 MS. ELLOR: And that's different for
18 every, that can be different, potentially, for
19 every state?

20 MR. ASSAR: It can be potentially
21 different for every state. Yes.

22 MS. ELLOR: And the farmers would not

1 have the option to opt out of any of that state
2 requirement, just to go with the FDA requirement,
3 because that would --

4 MR. ASSAR: I'm not clear --

5 MS. ELLOR: See what I mean?

6 MR. ASSAR: -- no.

7 MS. ELLOR: So if there's a minimum
8 that the FDA is asking for --

9 MR. ASSAR: Okay.

10 MS. ELLOR: -- across the board --

11 MR. ASSAR: Right.

12 MS. ELLOR: -- can farmers just supply
13 that? Do they have the option to?

14 MR. ASSAR: So for the -- well, yes.
15 There's no requirement.

16 The state cannot, okay, I don't want
17 to get too far ahead here because this is kind of
18 developing. Again, the states are more focused
19 on kind of ramping up and developing strategies,
20 I don't want to speak too far ahead of what
21 they're doing.

22 But one of the areas that they're

1 exploring, and looking to develop, is the
2 authority to do produce safety inspections. Some
3 of them don't have that authority currently.
4 Some do, some don't. Some have certain aspects
5 of it.

6 So they're all over the place on that.
7 And again, to get a level playing field, they're
8 supposed to, if they are being awarded funds for
9 doing inspections, they either have to get that
10 authority or they have to work with us, be
11 commissioned to be able to do the inspectional
12 work.

13 And so in the case, I'm not sure where
14 their authorities are with respect to collecting
15 information from the farms. We don't have a
16 registration, FDA does not have a registration
17 requirement for farms. For unregistered or
18 facilities that are not required to register.
19 And farms, your traditional farm, is not a
20 facility that's required to register.

21 So we won't require that. But I'm
22 saying states, I don't know where they are with

1 their authorities and so forth. And I'm not sure
2 what they can require and can't.

3 MR. MCREYNOLDS: But just to follow-up
4 on that point. I mean, if the FDA doesn't have a
5 registration list of farms, but the cooperative
6 agreement does require the states to --

7 MR. ASSAR: Collect them.

8 MR. MCREYNOLDS: -- have an inventory
9 --

10 MR. ASSAR: That's correct. Yes.

11 MR. MCREYNOLDS: -- and share that
12 with you.

13 MR. ASSAR: That's correct. Yes.

14 MR. MCREYNOLDS: So I mean, the
15 distinction between whether it's a registry, like
16 for food facilities and not --

17 MR. ASSAR: Right.

18 MR. MCREYNOLDS: -- I mean, is that
19 really the point?

20 MR. ASSAR: Well I mean, again, it
21 depends on what you're looking for, in both
22 cases. In the case of registration versus

1 inventory information, we take a very light,
2 light touch with respect to the cooperative
3 agreement on what is minimally required I guess.

4 And so, you know, I'm not sure how to
5 address that question quite frankly. They are
6 different, in my view, because one is, a
7 registration requirement is a requirement and you
8 need to provide information, in advance of an
9 inspection, that you are doing this level of
10 business and other information as well.

11 Whereas the inventory information that
12 could be collected by the states and could
13 satisfy the cooperative agreement, may not need
14 that, first of all, it may not be a requirement,
15 as I've just discussed, by the states. So even
16 if the states wanted the information, they
17 couldn't get the information because they don't
18 have the authority to get the information. FDA
19 doesn't have the authority to get the
20 information, so they get what they can get to
21 satisfy the need.

22 And so it's just one of the challenges

1 in instituting a program that covers so many
2 different farmers and so many different states,
3 that have different levels of purview and
4 jurisdiction. But we do think this is the
5 appropriate approach, I mean, to work with the
6 states.

7 We don't want it to be all about us.
8 We want to spread it out to the states and work
9 with the states to make all of this happen.

10 And I think that it's a different
11 model than other, some of the other FDA programs
12 that aren't instituted as cooperative. You know,
13 true cooperative programs.

14 MR. NOLAN: Bob Nolan. As a small
15 vegetable grower, I'm kind of interested in the
16 timeline and what are the requirements that I'm
17 going to have to have to comply with the produce
18 safety rule?

19 I understand about the water, but the
20 other requirements, is there a timeline --

21 MR. ASSAR: So --

22 MR. NOLAN: -- and are there guidance

1 documents out there as to what I'm going to have
2 to do?

3 MR. ASSAR: So the timeline for the
4 rule, the first compliance date is for large, it
5 starts January 2018. And then the next
6 compliance date is 2019, for what we call small.
7 There's, yes, small. And then 2020 for the very
8 small.

9 And then on top of that, currently, we
10 have staggered implementation compliance dates
11 associated with water. So tack on two years,
12 additional years, to meet the water requirements
13 associated with those dates.

14 So for the large, they wouldn't need
15 to comply with the water requirements until 2020.
16 For small, 2022, so on and so forth.

17 And one, in terms of complying with
18 the rule, I would say water is certainly an area
19 where we understand there's a lot of guidance
20 needed to understand how to comply and implement
21 the rule.

22 And however, in some of the other

1 areas, provision areas, there is a lot of
2 information within the rule itself. It's very
3 direct, it's very JMP like. It tells us, this is
4 what you need to do, this is what.

5 And in the areas where we talk about
6 adequate, nobody likes the word adequate. In the
7 preamble of the rule, which is like the part of
8 the rule that kind of rationalizes the
9 requirements and addresses the comments
10 associated with the rule, that's where there's
11 information about our thinking with respect to
12 what adequate could mean. Examples of what
13 adequate is or what adequate isn't.

14 So a lot of the information is within
15 the rule itself. And I would encourage you to
16 look at that. Yes.

17 And I would say, one of the first
18 stops would be to find a rule with the preamble
19 information, where we have addressed comments.
20 People are asking, how do I, they ask questions
21 like, how do I comply with this. And we may
22 address it in that area. Or, what is your

1 thinking about complying with this or how would
2 this carry out. We would address it in the
3 comment response, possibly.

4 There's a chance we could also defer
5 some of that to guidance as well. But we
6 understand the importance of guidance, we want to
7 get that out there as soon as possible. Ahead of
8 the first compliance date. The 2018 compliance
9 date.

10 Yes, Jessica?

11 MS. WASSERMAN: Hey, Jessica
12 Wasserman. Just wondered whether you could do
13 the water issues through guidance instead of the
14 --

15 MR. ASSAR: That's certainly an
16 option.

17 MS. WASSERMAN: -- rulemaking?

18 MR. ASSAR: That's certainly an
19 option. And I'm, yes, that's certainly an
20 option. How to do address the water requirements
21 in guidance.

22 MS. KNORR: Not to keep you in the hot

1 seat too much longer, Samir, I appreciate your
2 time and --

3 MR. ASSAR: Sure, no problem.

4 MS. KNORR: -- your willingness to --

5 MR. ASSAR: I'm used to it.

6 MS. KNORR: -- field these questions.

7 But going back a little bit to the farm inventory
8 information, is there any way that we could
9 receive the information? Like the minimum
10 required information that the FDA is requesting.

11 MR. ASSAR: So the cooperative
12 agreement is, I believe that all that information
13 is publicly available.

14 MS. KNORR: Okay.

15 MR. ASSAR: I'm not a grants person
16 or, but I believe all of that information is
17 publicly available.

18 MS. KNORR: Okay.

19 MR. ASSAR: And so --

20 MS. KNORR: Yes. If we could get a
21 copy of that, I think that would be very helpful
22 for our information.

1 And also, is there some sort of a
2 confidentiality agreement that's part of these
3 farm inventories and that kind of thing?

4 MR. ASSAR: I'm not exactly sure about
5 that.

6 MS. KNORR: Okay.

7 MR. ASSAR: I am not the best person,
8 I am not in charge of the cooperative agreement
9 so I can't answer that question.

10 MS. KNORR: Okay.

11 MR. ASSAR: I believe there would be.
12 Yes.

13 MS. KNORR: All right. And then
14 finally, I mean, I understand that states are
15 probably excited to be able to use this as a
16 vehicle to gather information for their
17 educational programs, I'm just wonder whether or
18 not this is the appropriate vehicle for them to
19 do that?

20 I mean, if they are gathering this
21 information for food safety requirements, then
22 perhaps FDA should be encouraged to encourage the

1 states to look at separate vehicles for gaining
2 the information that they want to --

3 MR. ASSAR: Yes.

4 MS. KNORR: -- obtain for their
5 educational purposes and their service purposes.

6 MR. ASSAR: Yes. And I should say
7 that, and again, I'm not the expert on this, but
8 we have granted an award, and we are working with
9 a certain organization, I believe I can announce
10 that, Dan & Bradstreet, to collect a level of
11 information. They don't have, I mean, it's
12 really information that they already have. It's
13 not any new information. So, yes.

14 MS. BETTS: Okay, seeing no more
15 questions I guess we will thank you, Samir, for
16 your time.

17 MR. ASSAR: Certainly.

18 (Applause.)

19 MS. BETTS: With that, we'll ask Jan
20 to come up. And she's going to give us a little
21 status on some of the other produce rules. The
22 foreign supplier and the third-party rule.

1 MS. CARLSON: So good morning, my name
2 is Jan Carlson and I am a special assistant in
3 the Office of the Center Director at CFSAN at FDA
4 and I'm happy to be with you today. Thank you
5 for having me.

6 I am here to talk about non-produce
7 rule topics. My subjects are more import
8 related. It's the Food Safety Modernization Act
9 Rules on Foreigner Supplier Verification
10 Programs, or FSVP, as well as the third-party
11 certification program.

12 So I'll start with FSVP, as that's a
13 slightly, has slightly broader application. The
14 foreign supplier verification programs will play
15 an important role in the risk-based prevention
16 oriented approach that FDA is implementing under
17 the new FSMA statute.

18 And FSVP is particularly important,
19 because for the first time it requires importers
20 to take certain actions to verify that the food
21 that they're importing, into the U.S., has been
22 produced in a manner that meets the applicable

1 FDA food safety standards.

2 And the FSVPs are risk-based in so far
3 as they take into account different types of
4 hazards, different types of importers and
5 different types of suppliers.

6 So under FSVP, the importers are
7 required to develop these verification programs
8 to provide assurance that their foreign suppliers
9 are using processes and procedures, that provide
10 at least the same level of public health
11 protection, as are required under the FSMA
12 preventative controls and produce safety
13 regulations. As well as that the food is not
14 adulterated or misbranded regarding allergens.

15 And again, the requirements in the
16 FSVP program apply to importers. The importer is
17 the U.S. owner, or consignee of the food, at the
18 time of entry.

19 Which means it's the person in the
20 United States, who at the time of entry, either
21 owns the food, has purchased the food or has
22 agreed to purchase the food. And if there is no

1 U.S. owner or consignee of the food at the time
2 of entry, then the importer is the U.S. agent or
3 representative of the foreign owner or consignee.

4 The salient point here though is that
5 the importer is someone in the United States, who
6 bears responsibility of the safety of that
7 imported food.

8 So what does an importer have to do
9 under the foreigner supplier verification
10 program? First, they must analyze the hazards in
11 the food that they are importing. And once the
12 hazards are identified, they have to evaluate the
13 foreigner suppliers' performance.

14 For example, what does the foreigner
15 supplier have in terms of food safety procedures,
16 what is their history of compliance, have they
17 been the subject of an import alert or a warning
18 letter. And then the importer also has to
19 analyze what risk is posed by the food.

20 So based on their analysis of the
21 hazards and their evaluation of the supplier and
22 the risk, the importer then determines what

1 verification activities will be appropriate and
2 how often those activities have to be conducted.

3 So possible verification activities
4 include onsite auditors of the suppliers,
5 sampling and testing, as well as review of the
6 suppliers records.

7 And note that the regulation makes
8 annual onsite auditing the default approach, when
9 there is a hazard that can result in serious
10 adverse health consequences or death to humans or
11 animals.

12 So once the verification activities
13 are complete, the importer has to review and
14 assess them. And if the results don't provide
15 adequate assurance, that the hazards are being
16 controlled, then the importer has to take certain
17 corrective actions.

18 For example, working with their
19 supplier to correct whatever problems there are,
20 or if need be, discontinuing use of that
21 supplier, until the problems are resolved.

22 So that's a little about the FSVP in

1 terms of compliance dates.

2 The date by which importers have to
3 comply with a new FSVP regulations varies,
4 depending on the size of the foreigner supplier
5 and the nature of the importer.

6 But speaking generally for importers,
7 whose foreigner supplier is not subject to the
8 preventative controls or produce safety
9 regulations, their compliance date is coming up
10 at the end of this month. It's May 30.

11 For importers whose foreigner supplier
12 is subject to the preventative controls or
13 produce safety regulations, the importers
14 compliance date is six months after the supplier
15 is required to meet the preventative controls or
16 produce safety requirements.

17 And as Samir said, with regard to
18 produce safety, the same is true for FSVP. FDA
19 is taking a soft launch approach to FSVP
20 compliance, as we are with all the FSMA
21 regulations.

22 We intend to work with stakeholders as

1 we go forward. And our philosophy is to educate
2 before and while we regulate.

3 So in terms of FSVP guidance
4 documents, we recently issued a draft guidance
5 document on the unique facility identifier that
6 importers have to provide at entry. And the
7 guidance states that the DUNS number is
8 appropriate to use for that purpose.

9 We are working on a broader draft
10 guidance on FSVP more generally. And I am unable
11 to comment on exactly when the broader guidance
12 will issue, but it is in progress.

13 And we will also be issuing a guidance
14 document informing small businesses how to comply
15 with the FSVP.

16 So let me quickly move on to the
17 third-part certification program. Another
18 regulation established under the FSMA.

19 The third-party certification
20 regulation establishes a voluntary program for
21 the accreditation of third-party certification
22 bodies, or auditors, to conduct food safety

1 audits. And the auditor may then issue a
2 certification of the foreign facility and the
3 food that the foreign facility produces.

4 And the certifications issued under
5 this program have two potential uses. The first
6 is a voluntary use for importers bringing food
7 into the U.S. They may participate in what we
8 call the voluntary qualified importer program, or
9 VQIP.

10 VQIP is like a best importers program.
11 It requires a higher level of food safety
12 performance. And in exchange for that higher
13 performance, the importers receive expedited
14 entry at the border.

15 The other use for the certifications
16 under the third-party program would be much more
17 limited. There will be a mandatory use.

18 Under FSMA, FDA was given the
19 authority to make a risk-based determination at
20 the border that a food offered for import has to
21 be accompanied by some sort of an assurance that
22 that food complies with our requirements. And

1 certifications issued under the third-party
2 certification program, will satisfy this FDA
3 requirement. However, these situations are
4 expected to be very limited and their use rare.

5 And I want to stress quickly that the
6 third-party certification program is really
7 entirely distinct from FSVP. There are two tools
8 in our toolbox, but the FSVP audits do not have
9 to be conducted by an auditor accredited under
10 the third-party program.

11 And the FSVP requirements, there's no
12 requirement for importers to use third-party
13 accredited auditors to get certification. So
14 it's not like you have to have one of the third-
15 party certifications to get your goods in at the
16 border. They really are separate programs.

17 Let me speak just a minute about the
18 framework of the third-party certification
19 program. There is really four levels of actors
20 for that program.

21 The top level can be considered FDA.
22 We're obviously establishing and organizing the

1 program. And we will be accepting applications
2 from accreditation bodies who we will review for
3 criteria such as competency and impartiality.

4 So if we're the FDA, at the top, then
5 the next level down are those recognized
6 accreditation bodies that have satisfied the
7 requirements for our program.

8 Those accreditation bodies will then
9 go out and accredit the certification bodies or
10 auditors. And then at the base of the tiers are
11 the actual individual facilities that the
12 auditors will go out and assess and give out
13 certifications for.

14 In terms of compliance dates, the
15 compliance dates for this program are also fast
16 approaching. We're targeting June, so next
17 month, for the rollout of the third-party
18 program. And at that time, we will begin
19 accepting applications from accreditation bodies
20 for FDA recognition.

21 And after we recognize them, those
22 accreditation bodies can go out and start

1 certifying auditor, or I'm sorry, accrediting
2 auditors. And we believe that by early 2018 we
3 will have accredited auditors in place, ready to
4 start assessing facilities and issuing
5 certifications.

6 So we believe that the VQIP will be up
7 and running early next year.

8 There are some guidance documents
9 associated with this program as well. In
10 November of last year, we issued our guidance on
11 the VQIP program.

12 In December, we issued a guidance on
13 model accreditation standards for the auditors
14 under the program. It addresses things like
15 quality assurance, conflict of interest and
16 technical competency.

17 The model standards were developed
18 using ISO standards as well as industry best
19 practices.

20 And I did want to note that the FSMA
21 requires a user fee program for us to establish a
22 user fee program so that FDA gets reimbursed for

1 its work, setting up and running the third-party
2 program.

3 The fees will be collected at the time
4 that an accreditation body applies for
5 recognition from FDA. They will also have an
6 annual fee. And there will also be an annual fee
7 for the accredited auditors in the program.

8 Are there any questions? Yes?

9 MS. WASSERMAN: So when you said that
10 there's a May 30 deadline coming up for
11 importers, if the foreign supplier, I guess you
12 would say, is not subject to either produce or
13 preventative controls, what would that be?

14 MS. CARLSON: What would that be?
15 That would be, I think, goods that fall outside
16 those rules for whatever reason. Maybe the
17 supplier, for whatever reason, doesn't, you know,
18 goods that aren't under the produce rule.

19 I have to admit, I'm having trouble
20 thinking of any right this second, but there
21 certainly are. I can get back to you on that.

22 MS. WASSERMAN: Okay, thank you.

1 MS. CARLSON: Anything else?

2 MS. BETTS: Any other questions?

3 Okay, thanks, Jan.

4 MS. CARLSON: Thank you.

5 MS. BETTS: Appreciate it. All right,
6 next up is Tricia Kovacs. And I'm going to pull
7 up her presentation, so.

8 MS. KOVACS: So while she's doing
9 that, I think there's research out there that
10 says you can't possibly pay attention for any
11 longer if you've been sitting here this amount of
12 time, so I encourage you to stand up, get your
13 water, refresh your coffee. Not take a break
14 necessarily, but move around a bit in the room if
15 you want to do that so that you can still think.

16 I hope I haven't opened too much of a
17 can of worms by asking you to stand up, but I
18 really do think that you'll be able to think
19 better. And I'm short, so I'm going to make one
20 big crackle sound while I fix this. There we go.
21 How's that work, can you hear me? Okay.

22 So, some of you may recognize me, I

1 talked with some of you on a rooftop last time we
2 met, at Up Top Acres down in Navy Yard, about our
3 local and regional food systems work at USDA.

4 As part of that work, I also work with
5 others here in the room about how food safety
6 standards, whether they are market requirements
7 or FSMA rules or voluntary audit programs, effect
8 producers and how we can help them be ready.

9 Great. So, I'm going to take these
10 notes away because I keep wanting to read them
11 and they're not mine.

12 (Off microphone comment.)

13 MS. KOVACS: So, like I said, what my
14 role and my relationships in this are really
15 about, how do we help farmers and other producers
16 and food businesses be ready to meet the food
17 safety challenges and requirements that are made
18 of them. Whether those are mandatory or
19 voluntary or buyer driven or what, and how are
20 they going to be ready to meet those changes in
21 their market places.

22 One of the ways that I do that is by

1 working with FDA and with NIFA, which is part of
2 USDA, to convene the FSMA collaborative training
3 forum. And as you heard from Samir, there are a
4 number of people who are in organizations that
5 have cooperative agreements out there to do
6 training.

7 So we know that training is a critical
8 piece of FSMA implementation. We know that USDA,
9 as the agriculture department, and FDA, both play
10 a role in making sure this all works as smoothly
11 as it can, and that there are lots and lots of
12 training options out there for producers. And
13 there have been for a long time.

14 Some of them have been funded by USDA,
15 some of them are now funded through cooperative
16 agreements with FDA and with USDA. And we just
17 wanted to make sure that we are committed to
18 whatever it takes to make sure that those are
19 coordinated and communicating with each other, so
20 that people get what they need.

21 So we're hosting the forum. So the
22 training forum is really just a place for all

1 those folks who are funded by USDA and by FDA, to
2 implement training programs, to come together to
3 have a dialogue, talk about their programs, what
4 they're doing, how they're doing, where they are
5 in that process, and any issues of common
6 concern.

7 So the goal for that is to eliminate
8 duplication and to make sure that we're using the
9 limited resources as well as we can, across those
10 programs.

11 So I'm going to start by telling you
12 who is in this forum and then I'll tell you a
13 little bit about where we are with it. The short
14 version is that we've just finished our first
15 four calls to hear from each other. And know
16 kind of what we think we need to do going
17 forward.

18 So I'm not going to go into what all
19 these different partners do, but I wanted you to
20 see who's in this group talking to each other
21 about the implementation of training programs.

22 So we have the alliances. The Produce

1 Safety Alliance, the Sprout Safety Alliance and
2 the Food Safety Preventive Controls Alliance.
3 These have developed standardized education
4 programs that are now being offered across the
5 country.

6 We have JIFSAN, Joint Institute for
7 Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. And they, in
8 our talk so far, have talked about their
9 international work.

10 One of the things that they brought to
11 the table, that I thought was interesting, is
12 just some experience with online trainings and
13 translated materials versus interpreter given
14 talks. So some perspectives on how those have
15 worked for them.

16 And then we have the national
17 Coordination Center. And this is the
18 International Food Protection Training Institute
19 Based in Battleground, Michigan. And they are,
20 oh sorry, my slides show here and here and I'm
21 sorry guys.

22 So anyway, NASDA. As you've already

1 heard, again from Samir, they are bringing
2 together, working with the states who have their
3 cooperative agreements to do planning and
4 implementation at the state level, in those 42
5 states.

6 But also, ideally to help all the
7 states kind of know how to move forward in this.
8 Some of their resources will be available to all
9 states, whether or not that have that.

10 And then they're also working on-farm
11 readiness review. So they have a national
12 consortium for produce safety that allows all
13 those states to talk to each other.

14 Right now, those states are in a
15 planning year, so right now, that will get to be,
16 I think, more robust as they learn from each
17 other, as they start to really implement the
18 rules.

19 They're also working on on-farm
20 readiness review. And again, that will have sort
21 of a document that will be available, a method
22 that they use, and that will be available to

1 states across the country.

2 And also, one of the things I'm most
3 excited about, is that the on-farm readiness
4 process will provide them some real on-farm
5 experience to feed back into the training
6 programs, that all these other cooperators and
7 other partners around the country are developing.

8 Now we come to the National
9 Coordination Center at the International Food
10 Protection Training Institute in Michigan. And
11 they are tasked with training and education for
12 small and medium sized producers, small
13 producers, small fruit and vegetable wholesalers,
14 and to provide coordination among the regional
15 centers, and others, as we will see.

16 I believe their initial mandate was to
17 work with the regional centers, which are here.

18 So these are the four regional centers
19 around the country and the universities that
20 house them. Each of these has multiple partners.

21 The southern region and western region
22 are funded through USDA and the other two are

1 funded with FDA. But they all come together.

2 The national coordination center has
3 monthly calls and reporting methods to kind of
4 keep those regional centers coordinated in their
5 work going forward.

6 And then there are a couple of other
7 cooperative agreements that were initially
8 outside. So NCC has a specific regional center
9 coordination role.

10 One of the things we found in our
11 first calls is that the local food safety
12 collaborative and the Native American Food Safety
13 Training Group were not necessarily participating
14 in that, and now they are. Because at the forum
15 we realize that there are a lot of things
16 happening that they also need to be tied into.
17 And that they need the visibility that is offered
18 by being officially connected to that
19 coordination center.

20 So I think that was one early outcome
21 of it that, even within these cooperative groups,
22 they're coordinating better.

1 So the local food safety collaborative
2 is led by the National Farmers Union Foundation,
3 and they have multiple partners across the
4 country to help them deliver, develop and
5 deliver, training and technical assistance and
6 support to those in the local food markets around
7 the country.

8 Like many of these, like the states
9 and like many of the regional centers, they are
10 in the process of doing some needs assessment and
11 planning for this. One of the things that I
12 learned from this, is that all these cooperative
13 agreements and cooperator groups, are sort of on
14 different timelines.

15 A lot of these agreements came onboard
16 at different times, and so being able to talk to
17 each other was challenging because they were all
18 at different places. And now they're starting to
19 get to a place where they kind of know what
20 they're about, they know what their, at least
21 their needs assessment is starting to go and look
22 at aligning timelines for different resources

1 that they're developing. And different outreach
2 mechanisms, assessment tools, so that they can
3 talk to each other about that.

4 So the local food safety collaborative
5 is in that place of looking at needs assessment,
6 developing partnerships and really starting to
7 plan going forward.

8 Similarly, at University of Arkansas
9 Fayetteville School of Law, we have the Native
10 American Tribal Center for food safety outreach,
11 education training and technical assistance. And
12 they are offering training and technical
13 assistance in all regions of Indian Country,
14 which spans 35 states.

15 So they have the task of figuring out
16 how to delivery trainings that are relevant and
17 appropriate and recognize the different levels of
18 jurisdiction that tribes work, tribal producers
19 and food businesses are working under. So the
20 forum has been really useful for them, to let
21 everyone else know that they are there, that they
22 need to partner with them in the different

1 regions and in the different states, and with
2 different kinds of producers.

3 They'll be doing some webinars and
4 they'll have a hotline interface as well, for
5 producers and food companies in their region.
6 And again, they're one of the ones that is now
7 tied into the monthly calls with the national
8 coordination center.

9 And then we have, and I won't go into
10 each of these projects, but I mentioned that, so
11 I'm based in AMS, I work across USDA, and one of
12 our partners is NIFA, the National Institute of
13 Food and Agriculture.

14 And they are important in this arena
15 because they are funding the food safety outreach
16 program. So they fund some of the regional
17 centers, but they also fund this grant program.

18 And that grant program has three
19 different types of grants to reach different
20 audiences and different needs. Generally, they
21 are customizing trainings for different
22 audiences.

1 Small to mid-size farms, beginning
2 farms, socially disadvantaged farmers, small
3 processors and small fresh fruit and vegetable
4 merchant wholesalers.

5 So under the three types we have pilot
6 projects, which are for new and potentially high
7 risk, high impact food safety and outreach
8 programs and local communities that reach
9 specific targeted audiences. Whether they're
10 non-traditional niche, hard to reach audiences
11 that for some reason, maybe it's culture or
12 language barriers, need some specific training
13 developed for them.

14 And then we have community outreach
15 projects. And those are to expand or add
16 additional audiences to existing programs and
17 then multi-state education and training projects.

18 Which are interesting because they
19 are, it doesn't necessarily mean like the pacific
20 northwest is all going to get together to do a
21 multi-state training, it might be that California
22 and Arizona and somewhere else have similar

1 products or climate needs, or food safety
2 concerns that affect them, and they can
3 coordinate together to try and address those
4 through some training and outreach programs.

5 And here's the exciting part, that's
6 all open right now, so I wanted to highlight
7 right now NIFA's food safety outreach program
8 requests for applications was announced last
9 month. The deadline is June 6th.

10 And I put up here the new project
11 focus. It's the same three categories, the same
12 overall goal as they've had in the past.

13 But then they've got just a little bit
14 of additional target here for pre-imposed
15 harvest, water testing and sampling. Which we
16 know, we've talked about quite a bit today, that
17 we don't know exactly what that's all going to
18 look like. Developing supply chain programs
19 and/or food safety plans.

20 And that they continue with some of
21 the goal to reach bilingual and provide
22 culturally appropriate training resources for

1 folks. So make a note about that.

2 I have some information here about
3 eligible applicants and all that. It's a pretty
4 broad grant program that many types of entities
5 can apply and get those grants to do that.

6 And while I'm not talking about all
7 the different things that are happening out there
8 in these, this is an area where a lot of the work
9 that's been happening for years, to reach certain
10 audiences for GAP or other food safety, some of
11 those are funded here, under this, to expand
12 those programs and make sure they're FSMA
13 compliant.

14 And it really gets at the diversity
15 that we know we need in the training around the
16 Food Safety Modernization Act. And I'm happy to
17 see that we'll be doing, funding some more again
18 this year.

19 And one of the other things that
20 happened through the forum is, at least for me, a
21 better understanding of how all of these are
22 going to fit into the coordination of this. They

1 do connect with the regional centers, but for
2 instance, the folks at Arkansas, who are working
3 on the tribal outreach programs, have said, let's
4 make sure that we're connecting to them too
5 because we are across regions, the same for the
6 local food one.

7 So, all of this has to come together
8 in some kind of a knowable thing. Which is
9 challenging.

10 So, I'll tell you where we are with it
11 all now. So, we just completed our initial call
12 series.

13 So, throughout April we had four, two
14 hour WebEx calls with all the entities I've just
15 mentioned. And each of them had a chance to give
16 a presentation on what they're doing. They also
17 provided sort of three-pagers, two-pagers so that
18 we didn't have to go through all the detail of
19 what they're doing in our phone call, but could
20 instead use that call to talk about things we
21 have in common.

22 Whether that is the assessments.

1 People are doing different needs assessments.
2 What are they doing, what have they found, what
3 do they need. Where are areas of four
4 collaboration. Similarly, evaluation, metrics,
5 data collection, reporting.

6 Those things where we know everybody's
7 work has some similarities. Program development,
8 training development, tools, resources.

9 How are they being shared out, where
10 are they being stored. All of those kinds of
11 conversations.

12 So we started to identify some of
13 those themes. And then also highlighted some
14 outstanding questions for FDA and USDA.

15 So these sessions are for them to talk
16 to each other, and for us to kind of get a better
17 picture of how it all comes together. But what
18 we find is that we pull out questions for USDA,
19 some of which you all have raised today, and we
20 take those back to USDA and FDA, to then be able
21 to inform the broader community and these folks,
22 later on.

1 But that it's not a discussion to tell
2 the federal agencies what they need or where
3 they're going, it's more to understand what's
4 happening in each of their different funded
5 programs.

6 So, we found that we are starting to
7 get a better understand of each other's projects
8 and timelines. And like I said, the timelines
9 are starting to line up a little better, since
10 they have all had their agreements for a little
11 bit of time now. They're starting to get their
12 feet under them.

13 Several ideas for aligning outreach
14 and assessment strategies, and then also just
15 learning from each other's experiences. So I'm
16 trying to think of a couple of examples.

17 So in one case, for instance, there
18 are trainers who are maybe not ready to be lead
19 trainers yet, because they don't have the
20 confidence of the experience in a certain piece
21 of it or a certain part of it. And some regions
22 are pulling together lead trainers from

1 somewhere, almost in a mentorship program, so
2 that the trainers that they have in their region
3 can hear, watch a lead trainer from somewhere
4 else do it and learn from them and then be able
5 to come lead trainers themselves.

6 So it's not all within its regions, a
7 lot of this work is to make sure that we are
8 using the best resources we have in the different
9 areas. So an expert from one region might be
10 helping another region or another cooperative
11 agreement to what they're doing.

12 And also working to improve outcomes
13 and metrics. We talked a lot about capturing, I
14 think we've all done a lot of capturing the
15 activities that we've done and the inputs that
16 we've put into programs, whether they're grant
17 funded or cooperative agreements, but thinking
18 about how do we get at, are the practices
19 improving, is the food safer, and are we doing
20 what we want to be doing with all of these
21 different programs out there. So starting to
22 think about all of that.

1 We will have an ongoing forum, which
2 we think will be quarterly calls. And some
3 coordination and communication between the group.

4 And we had so much conversation around
5 the specific presentations that we had that our
6 four, two hour calls ended with, and now we need
7 to have our first quarterly call to be able to
8 process what was got out of this and what we want
9 to do to coordinate. And what we want to do to
10 share out information about what we have learned
11 from each other and what this looks like to the
12 outside world.

13 And then, like I said, the one change
14 that's already happened is that those national
15 coordination center monthly calls now include
16 some of the cooperative agreements that are
17 reaching specific target audiences.

18 So that's what I have today. I don't
19 have a clock so I don't know where we are with
20 time, but I'm pretty sure we have time for
21 questions. Great.

22 MR. SUTTON: I know one of the

1 challenges in the training has been developing
2 the resources for other languages, rather than in
3 English. I know the PSA has been fairly strict
4 about opening that particular training up,
5 because they didn't want anything lost in
6 translation.

7 Is a little bit of what your program
8 is going to do, is that going to make that
9 happen?

10 Because honestly, I take my foreman to
11 that training. It's in English, they're losing a
12 lot more in translation because they're hearing
13 it in English, so what are we doing to bridge
14 that gap, is that what these programs are about?

15 MS. KOVACS: Well, I think there are
16 a couple of answers to that. I know that the PSA
17 folks are trying to figure out what they can do
18 about getting materials available in other
19 languages. I don't know for sure about the
20 trainer aspect of that. What the status is of
21 that.

22 But the food safety outreach program

1 grants can be part of bridging that gap. They
2 can provide language specific or culturally
3 relevant or culturally available programs.

4 And those are, it's a grant program.
5 So it's a matter of chosen among the ones that
6 are proposed there. But I think due to things
7 like this collaborative forum, the projects that
8 are developing the materials and programs, will
9 be shared back out with the rest of the group and
10 available in multiple ways through different
11 programs.

12 And I think, I mean, PSA is definitely
13 part of this collaborative and I think it will
14 feed into the way they're approach it too, but I
15 don't have a specific answer from them. Samir
16 maybe?

17 MR. ASSAR: I can probably, this is
18 Samir, so I can perhaps help. Yes, so PSA is
19 working on the translations and they are looking
20 to issue a Spanish translated curriculum and
21 materials very, very soon.

22 They have the translation, they

1 piloted the translation, translated materials.
2 So hopefully within the next week or two those
3 translated materials will be live.

4 Also, I mentioned in my talk that some
5 of, there are international trainers training the
6 trainers and lead trainers that have been
7 certified, and so, yes, the hope is that they
8 will go out and train others and they'll be more
9 lead, international lead trainers and the
10 magnifying effect will start happening. So, it's
11 all starting to roll.

12 In terms of future translations
13 outside of Spanish, we are kind of triaging to
14 prioritize what are the other languages that need
15 to be translated.

16 You know, French is up there. Not
17 because France is producing produce, but there
18 are so many French speaking countries. And there
19 are other translations that are in the queue as
20 well that are being considered.

21 MS. KOVACS: It's interesting, one of
22 the things that I learned from listening to

1 JIFSAN in these calls is, their experience was
2 that people wanted translated materials, but not
3 interpreted trainings or trainings in their own
4 languages, but that is because a lot of those are
5 training the trainers where their trainees are
6 university educated trainers. And so I do think
7 that there may be more need when we're training
8 producers, informant and farm workers, to meet
9 their needs. Other questions? Yes.

10 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Thanks very much for
11 being with us, Tricia. In terms of lead trainers
12 on the produce safety lines, I know that list is
13 starting to get out, actually be public, and so
14 we know who they are.

15 I guess I'm aware of people who are
16 not working in extension, but with ten years of
17 experience training farmers in food safety,
18 working with USDA to develop the group GAP
19 program, but who are not getting approved as lead
20 trainers and having to spend more money and go
21 through another train the trainer and this sort
22 of thing.

1 Certainly, anecdotally I feel like
2 this is a trend and a concern from a lot of
3 stakeholders who already have track records of
4 working with these very populations, limited
5 resource populations of producers.

6 Can you speak to anything about how
7 the PSA lead trainer approval process is, the
8 transparency of it and how some of this might be
9 addressed?

10 MS. KOVACS: I am not directly
11 involved with that process so I'm a little bit
12 out of the loop on that right now. I do know
13 that trainers and lead trainers are being
14 approved sort of more quickly at this point.

15 And I guess I would the ask the
16 questions, Samir may be able to answer this or
17 others, but I am not the direct liaison to PSA,
18 except through this.

19 I know that they're also sending back
20 feedback to some of those lead trainer lead
21 applications. And so I don't know, I would be
22 interested to see kind of what the barriers are

1 to those groups. And I am sure that the PSA
2 folks would as well. Samir, do you want to add
3 to that?

4 MR. MCREYNOLDS: I mean, I've seen
5 some people's feedback and it was dubious. As
6 the term to the reasons for, based on the
7 person's resume.

8 MR. ASSAR: Yes, thank you for asking
9 the question. And we are certainly aware of that
10 issue and we want to work with PSA to get as many
11 lead trainer certified as possible.

12 There is an application process, as
13 you know. And the application process not only
14 gauges your ability to train and your experience
15 in training, it also gauges your ability, or your
16 knowledge, around the produce safety rule.

17 And what we've seen, even from
18 experienced trainers, cooperative extension, is
19 that there have been a number of issues. Whether
20 it, in some cases they have not completed the
21 application form to the extent that they should,
22 to get confidence that they know the rule.

1 It's evident that they have training
2 experience, but it seems like they're, it's not
3 clear whether they understand the rule itself.
4 So there is a process to kind of circle back with
5 those lead trainers to find out, to find out
6 whether or not they know the rule or not.
7 Because that's critical.

8 If you go out and do training and you
9 don't know the rule and you're doing the usual
10 thing, we're convinced you can do more harm than
11 good.

12 And the FSPCA is running into a
13 situation where they've basically opened the
14 gates for a lot of leech trainers to go out there
15 and do training. And now they're having to do,
16 you know, they're seeing inconsistencies and
17 issues, with respect to the training that are
18 being offered. And they're going through a kind
19 of retroactive process to take, to kind of
20 decertify trainers that are not appropriate
21 trainers.

22 So we're working with PSA to get that

1 balance. That right balance. But the bottom
2 line is, we absolutely want to get as many lead
3 certified trainers as possible.

4 And we're trying to, that list of
5 trainers that are, or potential candidate
6 trainers, lead certified candidate trainers that
7 need to be followed up on, that's taking some
8 time. And we're trying to get that quickly
9 resolved as quickly as possible so that we can
10 get those trainers out there.

11 MR. MCREYNOLDS: I appreciate that.
12 And certainly recognize the importance of
13 maintaining consistency and everything. With 350
14 words to answer these questions is not a lot to
15 really demonstrate your knowledge of the rule.

16 And I think that's the concern is
17 that, well, you have these very short answers and
18 then who gets the follow-up. If you're an
19 extension person it seems like, well, you don't
20 get follow-up, you're approved. If the answers
21 are close enough.

22 Whereas with private or community

1 based trainers are getting, well, we need a
2 longer answer from you. And like I say, I'm
3 certainly aware of at least one case where the
4 response back, as to why what areas of the rule
5 they didn't know was, from the legal perspective,
6 not sound.

7 MR. ASSAR: I think I might take that
8 back with the PSA. I do know that there were
9 experience cooperative extension applications
10 that did not get approved.

11 MS. KOVACS: Anyone else?

12 MS. HERRON: I have a question.
13 Johanna Herron. Hi, Tricia, thank you for
14 everything. I can't imagine that this is an easy
15 task. There is a lot of duplicity. You see that
16 with funding events.

17 So you've got specialty crop, and
18 you've got all these different funding sources,
19 the FDA agreements. And it's unclear sometimes,
20 I think for states, and I don't know if this is
21 totally a question or a comment, but for states,
22 on who is allowed to be doing what.

1 Certainly, from the farmer
2 perspective, it's all the same to them. Where
3 you have farmers that may be larger and GAP
4 certified or have gone through that process, are
5 now the target. Or not target, but they are the
6 recipient of the new FSMA attention.

7 And so to them they are wanting the
8 two regulatory needs to be met, but their buyer
9 still requires that GAP. And I know they're
10 working together and moving forward together.

11 Is there any end in sight where they
12 would be compatible or one covers the other?

13 I know ones' buyer driven and ones
14 not, but they do overlap so much. I'm just
15 curious if you can speak to that.

16 MS. KOVACS: Well, the GAP standard is
17 a voluntary standard, as you mentioned. It is an
18 audit program and it will never be the inspection
19 for the Food Safety Modernization Act rules.

20 But there is a currently ongoing
21 process to align the standards that they are
22 auditing to, with the FSMA expectations in the

1 produce safety rule. So that's where we are with
2 that. I think that's where it will continue to
3 go.

4 MS. BETTS: Leanne, did you want to
5 comment too?

6 MS. SKELTON: Yes, let me weigh into
7 this. So, as Tricia said, there's an alignment
8 project going on between, for example, USDA GAP.
9 I'm sure other audit service providers are doing
10 the same work.

11 But what I know, from my work with
12 FDA, is that, I would say in the best of
13 circumstances, you all might say in the worse of
14 circumstances, FDA just does not have the bodies.
15 Nor do the state departments of agriculture have
16 the bodies that would be sufficient in number to
17 inspect, that's an FDA term of art, not a USDA
18 term of art in this respect, to inspect every
19 farm.

20 And so they'll never have the right
21 number of people, whatever that is. And so
22 they're looking at whatever else is out there,

1 that's considered credible, to balance where the,
2 either the state FDA or the federal FDA needs to
3 go.

4 So while, as Tricia said, our GAP
5 audit, for example, from the USDA perspective, is
6 never going to be a compliance function of FDA,
7 we don't want it to be, they don't want it to be,
8 the information from that work could be useful
9 as, whether the federal FDA or the state FDA,
10 figure out how best to use their limited
11 resources. So it's not a guarantee.

12 Any other work that's being done out
13 there is not a guarantee that you'll never see
14 FDA, but it kind of changes the risk profile. If
15 you're doing something proactive, a GAP audit is
16 proactive. A solid educational program is kind
17 of a proactive kind of thing.

18 So not a guarantee, but it helps FDA
19 better figure how to use their limited resources.

20 MS. KOVACS: But it also, we've also
21 seen already that buyers are getting ahead of the
22 compliance dates for FDA and starting to ask

1 producers already, about what they're doing and
2 are they in compliance. And to some degree, with
3 the water standards and things, that it's not
4 always clear, even to the producer yet, whether
5 they're in compliance.

6 But the audit programs being more
7 closely aligned over time will help them answer
8 that question with, I haven't been inspected and
9 I'm following the rules and I did pass this
10 audit. So it will help with some of that where
11 the buyers are getting out ahead of the farmers.

12 MS. BETTS: Okay, I think I'm going
13 to, I know there's some good discussion, but I
14 think I need to shut it down because it is noon
15 and we do have a reservation upstairs at the, I
16 think it's called the Cinnabar, up on the second
17 floor.

18 So you can take the elevators up to
19 the second floor or you can take the series of
20 escalators up to the second floor. And just tell
21 them you're with the Fruit and Vegetable
22 Industry.

1 They have plenty of space up there so
2 if any of our guests along the outside need a
3 space, there is amply space. So please feel free
4 to do that, or go wherever. But we could like to
5 start back at 1 o'clock.

6 We've asked Samir and folks to stay
7 for any discussion for the afternoon, and they
8 need to leave by 1:30. So we are trying to stay
9 to that time schedule. So if you could be back
10 by 1 o'clock, we greatly appreciate it. And we
11 appreciate all your questions and attention.

12 Thank you, Tricia, for a great first
13 half of the day. And you can, yes, I'll be here
14 in the room. They're going to come in and do a
15 refresh, but I will be here, I have to upload
16 some more presentations and what not.

17 So don't leave purses and phones and
18 stuff like that, but certainly papers and pens
19 and things of that nature, because I'll be kind
20 of in and out. So don't leave anything of great
21 value.

22 (Off microphone comment.)

1 MS. BETTS: Yes. Thank you, and we'll
2 see you all at 1:00.

3 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
4 went off the record at 12:05 p.m. and resumed at
5 1:08 p.m.)

6 MS. KNORR: Okay, thanks for coming
7 back. We have a couple people here that can only
8 stay until 1:30, both Samir and Jan, so I'd like
9 to move the Food Safety Working Group discussion
10 forward so that we can ask them any questions
11 while we still have them available.

12 So, Roland, I know that you and your
13 group have been diligently working on some draft
14 recommendations, so if you would like to share a
15 little bit about those with us I would appreciate
16 that.

17 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Thank you very much.
18 And, you know, both our Committee Chair, Cathy
19 Burns, and our Vice Chair, Lorri Koster, were not
20 able to be at this meeting today, so I am your
21 third string committee chairperson.

22 So, you know, I think just by way of

1 background for folks new to the Committee, you
2 know, food safety has been a top issue for this
3 Committee since 2015 when this Board was
4 reconstituted.

5 We have had recommendations over the
6 past two years on many of the things that we have
7 heard about being reported on already today,
8 audit harmonization, GAP/GHP fees, GFSI
9 recognition of the USDA program, support for
10 extension in industry to do food safety training,
11 inclusion of USDA GAPs in FDA's implementation
12 strategy, education about the value, education to
13 buyers about the value of the USDA audit program,
14 because it is, you know, friendly and useful for
15 producers, especially the small and medium sized
16 producers.

17 So there is a long, you know, sort of
18 history of engagement on FSMA and food safety in
19 general.

20 So in terms of what our Committee has
21 been working on since our last meeting, the
22 issues that we sort of tagged at our last meeting

1 as areas of investigation for possible future new
2 recommendations were the issues of training and
3 that the training programs for FSMA, in
4 particular, that are available, the importance of
5 continuing the USDA/FDA liaison position that
6 Leanne has so ably fulfilled over the last how
7 many long years at this point. Since 2007, '06?

8 MS. SKELTON: Three months, eight
9 years.

10 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Okay.

11 (Laughter.)

12 MR. MCREYNOLDS: And then the water
13 rules, which, again, we discussed, got an updated
14 briefing on earlier.

15 So you have copies of the draft
16 statements that our Committee reviewed or
17 discussed at our last working group meeting and
18 this, you know, we sort of researched, engaged,
19 talked among ourselves, and sought out other, you
20 know, expertise to lead to the development of the
21 proposed recommendations that you've got in front
22 of you.

1 So I will just quickly try to
2 summarize the main points here and, first,
3 looking at the training recommendation.

4 You know, the fundamental question, or
5 concern, that I think a lot of producers, you
6 know, surfaced, and have surfaced, you know, to
7 members of this Committee as time has gone along,
8 is that you've got an 8-hour PSA curriculum that
9 is the required curriculum, or that is the only
10 curriculum that's been approved so far for FDA to
11 demonstrate compliance with the education and
12 training requirement for a supervisor on your
13 farm.

14 The challenge is that it is a
15 generalized training. The challenge that we
16 particularly discussed in the Committee is that
17 it is not specific to particular commodities and
18 that -- So, therefore, it is not necessarily
19 ideal for some producers to have to spend eight
20 hours of their supervisor's time and money to go
21 to a training that isn't going to give them the
22 specific information to help them handle the

1 particular food safety and FSMA issues with their
2 particular crops.

3 So our recommendation is, and, again,
4 this is in the context of sort of our charge as a
5 Committee, as the Fruit and Vegetable Industry
6 Advisory Committee, to make recommendations to
7 USDA about things that are within its power to
8 do.

9 And part of being within USDA's powers
10 is they are represented as part of the Produce
11 Safety Alliance. They are serving on the Produce
12 Safety Alliance.

13 Leanne is a representative, Tricia
14 attends those meetings as well, and so our intent
15 with this recommendation is to encourage USDA as
16 a part of its interaction with the Produce Safety
17 Alliance to, number one, collaborate with
18 industry to develop specific trainings that will
19 be recognized as equivalent to PSA so I don't
20 have to take a training on peaches and take a
21 training on the PSA.

22 So, you know, actually having one

1 training that is FSMA for peaches, for example,
2 that would allow a producer to save the time and
3 money of a training that is not, not specific to
4 the concerns of their farm.

5 So equivalency, the PSA working with
6 industry to establish some equivalent training
7 types. Second, the PSA, as the question that we
8 talked about earlier, a variety of languages. We
9 feel like it's -- I am very glad to hear about
10 the progress on Spanish, you know, Hmong, and
11 various Burmese languages, and French.

12 There is a huge other range of
13 languages that is going to be important to have
14 these curriculums available in to ensure that
15 farm supervisors across the country can get
16 benefit out of this training.

17 So we want to encourage, and that
18 USDA, too, continue to engage with PSA to
19 diversify the language options and, of course, do
20 all this, you know, quickly, because farmers need
21 to get this training soon.

22 At the beginning of next year large

1 farms will have the obligation to have this
2 supervisor, someone who has gone through this
3 training.

4 Dan, do you want to offer any further
5 comments about this particular recommendation?

6 MR. SUTTON: Thanks, Roland. I mean
7 Roland covered most of it, but, you know, I think
8 what partly was eluded to in the conversation
9 this morning was is that even though the training
10 has been rolled out in English here for a while
11 they are running into some obstacles with that
12 and as we look to expand these into different
13 languages and other things like that it's going
14 take time, but we are nearing a compliance date
15 for a large sector of our industry in six months.

16 And I will speak on behalf of the
17 industry that I am in and I represent, we're kind
18 of -- There is a push and I have sent Hispanic
19 folks to this training and they are not getting
20 the information, but it's all that is available.

21 So part of this is is we want to try
22 to get this in a very timely manner to get this

1 rolled out and to get these curriculums a little
2 more industry-specific and language-specific so
3 that we are better prepared as an industry to
4 meet these obligations that are coming.

5 MR. MCREYNOLDS: So I know we want to
6 have discussion but we are on a tight timeframe,
7 so I am just going to continue just overviewing
8 the recommendations, if that makes sense, and we
9 can kind of do questions after or at a later part
10 of the meeting if that is what is necessary.

11 So secondly I would address your
12 attention to the USDA food safety liaison
13 position recommendation and, you know, the
14 fundamental issue here being that, you know, FDA,
15 the Food and Drug Administration, is coming up
16 with, has come up with, is in charge of enforcing
17 these rules, but it obviously directly impacts a
18 stakeholder to USDA, the fruit and vegetable
19 industry in particular.

20 And, indeed, FSMA does specifically
21 require that FDA coordinates its enforcement
22 efforts with USDA, that USDA has a role, and the

1 role of the USDA/FDA liaison position has been
2 critical to USDA's ability to stay involved in
3 FDA's regulatory processes and guidance
4 processes, and that is crucial for our industry
5 to continue to have that designated and high
6 level, you know -- I don't know if Leanne was
7 describing it just to a few of us or to
8 everybody, but, you know, she sort of sits
9 outside of other divisions of USDA and so it is a
10 high-level pipeline into FDA's processes.

11 So we recommend the strongest possible
12 terms that this continue to happen, that the work
13 continue to happen, and that USDA and FDA
14 prioritize a continuation of this staff position
15 at least through 2022 when the current compliance
16 dates are expected.

17 And, you know, we would encourage USDA
18 to get funded by FDA to receive funding by FDA,
19 from FDA, to extend this charge. So that's the
20 liaison position recommendation.

21 Finally, we have the water
22 recommendation. As we had, you know, an

1 extensive conversation earlier about the concerns
2 and the problems that people are running into in
3 the practical implementation or conceiving of the
4 practical implementation of the water rules.

5 Again, given that Congress has
6 authorized USDA to be involved and be coordinated
7 with in the development of rules and given that
8 FDA has come out and said, and as we heard some
9 here describe, you know, all options are on the
10 table in terms of how the water rule might be
11 reshaped, including potentially revising or
12 publishing a new regulation.

13 And our Committee's recommendation,
14 you know, based on the key points that we outline
15 in the background information, including the
16 question of are the microbial water criteria
17 valid at all or sufficiently valid, are the
18 testing frequencies scientifically valid, are the
19 processes for farms to get valid samples and get
20 sent in, all of these are scientific questions
21 that are not established right now.

22 And when you talk to water

1 researchers, when you talk to the scientists who
2 are part of the regional centers who are charged
3 with doing this training and who have been
4 researching water quality in particular they will
5 tell you that none of these issues are
6 scientifically defined, you know, determined to
7 be the right approach, the right approaches
8 aren't known.

9 And, also, you know, we heard about
10 the fact that the laboratory testing protocol is
11 not even one that is widely used in the water
12 testing industry, so it's a major problem.

13 So based on these conditions what our
14 working group wants this Committee as a whole to
15 consider is this recommendation that this USDA
16 input on the implementation of the rule advocate
17 for the withdrawal of the current water
18 standards, to go back to the drawing board, and
19 to follow the same process that they are doing
20 with soil amendments, of actually waiting until
21 they research what the right things are to do
22 before writing rules that tell us what the right

1 things are to do.

2 You know, that process is already
3 underway with soil amendments of animal origin.
4 The rule recognizes the need to have a process
5 because the scientists have determined the same
6 issue exists here in water and so we would
7 strongly urge that USDA advocate for, as part of
8 its interaction with FDA, for the withdrawal of
9 the rule as it is and undertake a scientific
10 process drawing on USDA's technical resources to
11 demonstrate, okay, what should be, what is the
12 real science that we can be certain of when it
13 comes to the use of agricultural water and the
14 risks that it does or doesn't present in
15 different parts of the country.

16 So I think we've got a little time for
17 questions, to start having questions before we
18 get to our speakers, so I think our Committee
19 would be glad to field any questions. I would be
20 glad to field any questions on any of these
21 recommendations or we can move to a vote.

22 MS. HERRON: I had one. I feel like

1 I am talking too much. This is really awesome.
2 I am amazed at all the great work that has gone
3 behind this.

4 Two comments on the, or thoughts, I
5 had on the liaison position. Typically you are
6 going to want to just name the position instead
7 of the person because that can change and I think
8 what's going to be important is the quality of
9 the person in that position and what they would
10 entail. That was one thing I noticed.

11 And then, also, just that, you know,
12 if FDA has a mission, USDA has a mission, you see
13 that at the State level, too, with the differing
14 missions and the FDA's reliance on the States to
15 create a program that is going to be successful
16 with the State I wonder if it could also be a
17 recommendation that States follow suit with that
18 liaison role because I think there is a number of
19 States that are struggling with that, because I
20 think that's going to be critical for the success
21 of it at a State level.

22 MR. MCREYNOLDS: So I appreciate both

1 of those points. Can you elaborate a little bit
2 on what USDA's, what we should be recommending
3 USDA's role be in having those State liaison?

4 MS. HERRON: I don't think you can do
5 a lot to mandate or anything like that, but I
6 think with the fact that there are these
7 cooperative agreements out there, a strong
8 recommendation or advisory point would be that
9 the States also follow suit and have an advisory
10 role or liaison between the Departments of Ag
11 versus their Health Department.

12 MS. KNORR: Do we have any other
13 questions or comments from anyone at this point?

14 (No audible response.)

15 MS. KNORR: I feel like given the
16 scope of all of these recommendations, you know,
17 we should allot some time in tomorrow's agenda to
18 have a little bit more of a robust conversation
19 about all of them so that we can get all of the
20 Full Committee's questions answered and then take
21 action on them tomorrow.

22 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Terrific. Well, that

1 concludes our report then but we'll look forward
2 to having a more in-depth conversation tomorrow.

3 MS. KNORR: Any questions or comments
4 from any of the observers? I don't know if any
5 of our FDA friends here want to chime in on any
6 of them.

7 (No audible response.)

8 MS. KNORR: No, okay. All right,
9 thank you. Thank you, seriously, for all of the
10 hard work. Clearly, a lot of it did go into
11 these recommendations and we appreciate that
12 work.

13 Next up is our Produce Consumption
14 Working Group and Christie has chaired that group
15 and we are going to do a little flip-flopping of
16 our speakers there. So Sasha Bard --

17 (Off microphone comment.)

18 MS. KNORR: Hi. Is going to be our
19 first speaker this afternoon to talk a little bit
20 about Team Nutrition. Thank you.

21 MS. BETTS: Come on up, Sasha, I'm
22 trying to get you set up here. Okay, and so you

1 can just -- this is --

2 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Click through with
3 the --

4 MS. BETTS: Yes. You can go up or
5 down, page up, you can go back and forth.

6 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Can you guys see me
7 yet?

8 MS. BETTS: It's just kind of warming
9 up and it will come right up, so you're ready.

10 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Perfect, thank you.
11 Hi, everybody, thank you for having me here after
12 lunch. My name is Sasha Bard Chamberlain and I
13 work with the USDA Child Nutrition Programs.

14 Earlier this year I had the
15 opportunity to speak with the Subcommittee, so I
16 am excited to have the opportunity to come here
17 today and address the Full Committee.

18 What they were interested in learning
19 about was USDA's nutrition education efforts and
20 how that might impact fruit and vegetable
21 consumption in the K through 12 setting.

22 And I am definitely passionate about

1 nutrition education. I am a registered dietician
2 by trade and before working with the USDA at the
3 national office I was a SNAP Ed Nutrition
4 Educator out in Washington State, specifically in
5 Snohomish County working with a lot of tribal
6 communities.

7 I have now been working with the USDA
8 for almost five years. My first four years was
9 at the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion,
10 and so CNPP if you are not familiar.

11 I did mostly nutrition marketing and
12 communications for My Plate, so material
13 development, outreach, and partnerships.

14 I moved over last May, so May of 2016,
15 to the Child Nutrition Programs, and am now the
16 team lead in the Nutrition Education and
17 Promotion Branch, which is known to the public as
18 Team Nutrition, and you'll learn a lot more about
19 Team Nutrition as I go through my slides.

20 I also wanted to share that I spent
21 six months at the White House as the Associate
22 Director for Let's Move in the office of First

1 Lady Michelle Obama.

2 And in that role I managed programs
3 and partnerships, a lot of cross-agency
4 collaborations throughout the federal government
5 as well as private and public partnerships.

6 So, let's see. I might actually
7 juggle things just a little bit. All right. So
8 this slide tells you a little bit more about what
9 Team Nutrition is, and, again, it's okay if you
10 haven't heard of us.

11 Team Nutrition is an initiative of the
12 USDA child nutrition programs and we support the
13 child nutrition programs by providing resources
14 free of charge to schools, childcare centers, and
15 summer meal sites that participate in the USDA
16 programs.

17 So we develop everything from
18 curriculum to posters, digital interactive games,
19 stickers, parent handouts, you name it. So if
20 you are a school that participates in the
21 National School Lunch Program you are eligible to
22 receive our resources free of charge and many of

1 our materials are available to the broader public
2 through our website.

3 Child Nutrition Programs you are
4 likely most familiar with are the National School
5 Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, and the
6 stats here on the slide give you an idea of their
7 scope and reach.

8 And the call-out box is a good
9 reminder that many of the meals that are provided
10 through the National School Lunch Program and
11 School Breakfast Program are provided at little
12 to no cost to the family.

13 So in Fiscal Year 2016 73 percent of
14 school lunches were free and reduced price and 85
15 percent of school breakfasts were free and
16 reduced price.

17 USDA also operates a special Milk
18 Program and a Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.
19 These are our two other school-based programs.
20 So the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program would
21 likely be of interest to this group and FFVP
22 operates nationwide in elementary schools that

1 have a high rate of free and reduced priced
2 lunches.

3 And the funding through FFVP is
4 awarded to States and it helps schools purchase
5 fresh fruits and vegetables that are used outside
6 of the typical meal time, so not during breakfast
7 and not during lunch, but typically provided as
8 snacks.

9 This, of course, expands the variety
10 of fruits and vegetables that kids are getting
11 exposed to during the school day and studies have
12 shown that children participating and schools
13 that are part of FFVP have an increased
14 consumption of fruits and vegetables.

15 So a sample school day, you think a
16 child might go to breakfast and have a banana
17 with their breakfast meal and during lunch they
18 might choose sweet potato and go to the salad
19 bar, and then in the afternoon they might be able
20 to sample blueberries as part of the FFVP snack,
21 so lots of opportunities for kids to try
22 different fruits and vegetables.

1 USDA also operates community-based
2 programs through the child nutrition programs,
3 Child and Adult Care Food Program, CACFP, is for
4 our youngest kids in the childcare setting, and
5 then the Summer Food Service Program, which
6 hopefully you are familiar with as well, which
7 helps to fill in the gaps during the summer
8 months. So, again, you can see the reach of
9 these programs.

10 So I think, again, it's important to
11 remind everybody of the breadth of the programs
12 that child nutrition operates, but for our
13 conversation today, again, we are focusing on the
14 K through 12 settings, so mostly school lunch and
15 school breakfast.

16 Again, as most of you likely know, the
17 updates were made to meal patterns and nutrition
18 standards for our school meal programs as a
19 result of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of
20 2010, and these updates support an increase of
21 fruits and vegetables in both school lunch and
22 school breakfast.

1 So the new policies weren't
2 implemented until School Year 2012 and 2013,
3 which means we are in our fifth year of
4 implementation now, and today over 90 percent of
5 schools report that they are successfully meeting
6 the updated nutrition standards.

7 And I know there has been some, you
8 know, things in the news, which I am happy to
9 talk about. You know, none of the announcements
10 that the Secretary made directly relate to fruits
11 and vegetables, but if you saw in the news there
12 were some updates regarding flavored milk, sodium
13 limits, and whole grains, and when we get to Q&A
14 if you want to talk more about that I am happy
15 to.

16 So how exactly are we providing more
17 fruits and vegetables in our meal programs?
18 Under the new meal patterns the USDA requires
19 that schools offer both fruit and vegetable
20 choices at lunch.

21 And previously it was fruits and
22 vegetables as a single component, so by

1 separating out those components we are making
2 sure that there is more variety offered.

3 Schools are now also required to offer
4 one cup of fruit or vegetable instead of a half a
5 cup at breakfast, so we increased that amount,
6 and USDA sets weekly requirements for vegetable
7 subgroups to make sure kids are being served a
8 variety of different types and colors of
9 vegetables throughout the week.

10 So by increasing variety and quantity
11 of fruits and vegetables within the program we
12 have positively impacted the amount of fruits and
13 vegetables children who participate in our
14 programs are selecting and consuming.

15 And according to the Dietary
16 Guidelines for Americans, I was looking at the
17 stats this morning, potatoes and -- Let's see,
18 potatoes and tomatoes are the most commonly
19 consumed vegetables, accounting for 21 and 18
20 percent of all vegetable consumption.

21 Lettuce and onion are the other
22 vegetables that make up more than 5 percent each

1 of total consumption. And so as you can see
2 while those are great choices we want to make
3 sure that there is more of a variety, you know,
4 that kids are being exposed to through the school
5 meal patterns.

6 So things that we require now are dark
7 green, red, orange, beans and peas, starchy,
8 these are some of the vegetable subgroups.

9 So let's look at some of the
10 statistics. According to the CDC 80 percent of
11 schools are offering two or more vegetables at
12 lunch as a result of the updated meal patterns.

13 A study by the Harvard School of
14 Public Health shows that vegetable consumption
15 has increased by 16 percent and the same study by
16 the Harvard School of Public Health showed that
17 23 percent more students selected fruits at
18 school meals.

19 And so while students -- Let's see.
20 While students may not be consuming more fruits,
21 if more students are selecting fruits and the
22 consumption rates are the same that were across

1 students then we are seeing an overall increase
2 in consumption. I had to talk that one through a
3 little bit.

4 But good news, the meal patterns have
5 impacted both fruit and vegetable consumption
6 positively, which was the goal, but even though
7 this is great news we want to continue to see
8 those numbers rise.

9 As the Dietary Guidelines show, you
10 know, kids are not meeting the fruit and
11 vegetable requirements. So children age 4 to 18
12 are not getting the required recommended amount
13 of vegetables with the lowest consumption among
14 boys 9 to 13 years and girls 14 to 18 years, and
15 only children in the 4 to 8 age group are
16 consuming the recommended amount of fruits.

17 So we still have a lot of work to do,
18 and these were the 2015 2020 Dietary Guidelines
19 that just came out.

20 So what is FNS doing to support the
21 new standards? We are doing a lot. Within my
22 division we provide training and technical

1 assistance to child nutrition professionals to
2 enable them to prepare and serve meals that
3 appeal to children.

4 So it's not just enough to put it on
5 the menu, but we want to make sure that the staff
6 that is preparing those meals know how to make it
7 tasty and that it's something kids want to eat.

8 We also want to help children have the
9 knowledge, skills, and motivation to make healthy
10 food choices, and we do that through nutrition
11 education, which is going to be mostly what I
12 will focus on in these slides.

13 And we want to build support for
14 healthy school environments that encourage
15 nutritious choices, and we'll talk more about
16 what that school environment looks like.

17 So here is one slide. When we think
18 about the school environment, you know, it's not
19 just the food that is served at lunch and at
20 breakfast.

21 That's a piece of it, but then there
22 is other food that is available throughout the

1 school day, so through vending machines, through
2 school parties and events, through fundraising
3 opportunities.

4 You also think about the nutrition and
5 health messages that kids receive at school.
6 This is, you know, a good piece of where
7 nutrition education comes in.

8 And then you have got food and
9 beverage marketing. So according to a study by
10 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 70 percent of
11 elementary and middle school students are exposed
12 to some kind of food and beverage marketing
13 through school and many of these advertisements
14 are for less-healthy products.

15 So the local wellness policy
16 regulations now make sure that any food marketing
17 to students during the school day meet consistent
18 nutrition standards.

19 And then, again, we've got physical
20 activity opportunities, recess, PE, sports, so
21 these are all inputs that are going to influence
22 a child's eating habits and physical activity

1 habits.

2 Another way to think about the school
3 environment is to consider all the ways that kids
4 receive messages about food and physical
5 activity. So in the cafeteria, in the classroom,
6 and through school events, at home, community,
7 and through the media.

8 So in Team Nutrition we use multiple
9 communication channels and target a variety of
10 settings and audiences with our messages so that
11 we can increase the number of times and the
12 number of ways that children receive nutrition
13 messages, and the more times kids hear these
14 messages the more likely they are to act upon
15 them.

16 Another thing we strive to do is
17 ensure that we are putting out high quality
18 nutrition education materials. Research shows
19 that quality nutrition education programs include
20 some or all of the following elements, that it
21 allows children to practice new skills, that it
22 builds self-efficacy, that it includes

1 observational learning, is interactive and
2 inquiry-based, includes positive reinforcement
3 and includes taste testing and food preparation
4 elements.

5 We also do early concept testing and
6 test our resources through focus groups
7 informative research to make sure they resonate
8 with the target audience.

9 So we are not just creating something
10 and putting it out there. We are being, you
11 know, we are looking at the latest research to
12 make sure that it is impactful and we are testing
13 it with our audiences.

14 All right, now let's jump into some of
15 the materials that we produce so you can see some
16 of them. We talked about nutrition education in
17 the classroom being one place for this.

18 So we want to make sure that nutrition
19 education is easy for schools to provide.
20 Teachers have a lot on their plate, I think we
21 are all aware of that, so we want to make sure
22 nutrition education isn't just one more thing

1 that they have to do, but that it helps teachers
2 meet the goals and standards that they are
3 already being held accounted for.

4 So when possible we integrate the
5 nutrition education into core subject areas, like
6 math, English, language arts, and science, and
7 this is really easy to do. We also work to align
8 our curriculums to national education standards.

9 And so even at the youngest level we
10 are able to integrate nutrition education into
11 core subjects. This slide shows a young student
12 with one of our emergent readers, and this is
13 part of the Discovery My Plate curriculum for
14 kindergarteners, and there is six emergent
15 readers offered through that curriculum.

16 So these easy-readers are common in
17 kindergarten classrooms and are characterized by
18 the repetition of simple sentences. They feature
19 kindergarten-level sight words and help students
20 build literacy skills, which in this case they
21 are learning about the five food groups and My
22 Plate, so a win-win, nutrition education

1 literacy.

2 This shows, you know, a highlight of
3 one of the books. So illustrations are used to
4 help the children learn new vocabulary. At the
5 end of the lessons the emergent readers are sent
6 home so kids can continue practicing their
7 reading skills with their families and the
8 teachers have a large, full-size version of the
9 book in the classroom when they are reading aloud
10 to the students.

11 Serving up My Plate is another one of
12 our standards-based nutrition education
13 curriculums. It is available in three level,
14 Grades 1 and 2, Grades 3 and 4, and Grades 5 and
15 6, and each comes with these elements that are
16 listed on the slide.

17 We even have a CD of original songs
18 all about healthy eating and nutrition. So I can
19 distribute copies if you are interested.

20 We also develop a lot of garden-based
21 nutrition education curriculums. So garden-based
22 nutrition education is a great way to offer

1 hands-on experiential learning that supports the
2 science, the math, the language arts, and the
3 health studies.

4 And a recent review of garden-based
5 nutrition interventions with kids suggest that
6 these programs have the potential to improve
7 students' vegetable intake, willingness to taste
8 a wider variety of fruits and vegetables, and
9 preferences for them.

10 It also works with adults. I started
11 gardening with my husband and now he eats way
12 more vegetables than he did when I first started
13 dating him.

14 We talked about the cafeteria being
15 another setting in the school environment where
16 there is an opportunity for nutrition education,
17 but, again, cafeterias can be a little hectic.

18 If you have been to one recently
19 during a lunchtime there is a lot of kids that
20 are coming through those doors, so this isn't the
21 setting where you are going to do a full-on
22 activity or a nutrition education lesson, but

1 there are moments and there are opportunities to
2 engage students and reinforce nutrition and
3 health messages.

4 These are examples of some of our
5 posters. So posters and signage are an easy way
6 for schools to reinforce nutrition messages and
7 the meal standards.

8 Another great one that we see in
9 cafeterias is doing taste tests, that's a real
10 easy thing as kids are coming through the door.

11 Okay, another topic when we think
12 about cafeterias is food waste, which is why Team
13 Nutrition developed this brochure, you'll see it
14 here on the slide, that addresses the concern and
15 offers tips for school staff, parents, and
16 students to help reduce food waste at school.

17 For school nutrition professionals,
18 some like ideas of content you will find in here,
19 we encourage that they engage students in menu
20 planning and taste test new menu items.

21 We were just talking about that, it
22 was a great way to get the buy-in from the

1 students about the new foods.

2 Cutting fruit into smaller pieces, and
3 this may not sound like a novel idea, or maybe it
4 is, but especially for the younger kids, eating a
5 whole apple or having to peel that orange is
6 going to take them a lot of time when they've got
7 a short lunch period. It's things like this that
8 will increase the consumption and help prevent
9 the waste.

10 Giving kids a choice, so using a salad
11 bar is one technique that we found gives kids a
12 wider variety of fruits and vegetables and they
13 are able to select the ones that they prefer.

14 For school administrators some tips to
15 help prevent food waste is to give students more
16 time to eat. Extending the lunch period from 20
17 to 30 minutes has been shown to reduce waste by
18 nearly one-third.

19 So we know that's a struggle, but if
20 schools can make it happen then they can help
21 with this food waste, and scheduling recess
22 before lunch.

1 So this has also been shown to reduce
2 plate waste by as much as 30 percent. So, again,
3 it kind of makes sense, kids get to run around,
4 they work up an appetite, they come in hungry,
5 and more willing to eat a wider variety of foods
6 and try new foods.

7 Family engagement, we talked about the
8 home being an important, you know, aspect in the
9 big picture here, and so we want to make sure
10 that through our resources we are also engaging
11 the parents and the families.

12 This is -- So with each of our
13 curriculums we have at least one parent
14 engagement resource. This was with our Discover
15 My Plate curriculum and it just shows some of our
16 parent handouts that the teachers can send home
17 to let the parents know what their kids are
18 learning about in school, help the parents learn
19 about the new meal patterns, and so that they can
20 help reinforce at home as well.

21 Okay, school-wide events. So Team
22 Nutrition's Popular Events Idea booklet offers

1 creative ideas and instructions for 20 themed
2 events on nutrition and physical activity.

3 It is designed for elementary and
4 middle schools and shows easy ways to include
5 these ideas into existing school activities and
6 holiday observances.

7 So if any of you have kids you know
8 that there is often school events, we want to
9 make sure that schools have ideas for how they
10 can make those a little bit healthier to
11 reinforce the healthy eating and the physical
12 activity.

13 There is also real life examples of
14 Team Nutrition schools across the country that
15 are in the booklet so that schools can learn from
16 each other about what is working and what they
17 have done.

18 And one of my favorite examples is
19 from El Monte School District, which is out in
20 California, and they have a bring your parents to
21 breakfast event and it's a superhero theme, so
22 it's called Superheroes Eat Breakfast, Too, and

1 for the breakfast the parents and the kids, their
2 families, are encouraged to dress up as their
3 favorite superhero, and the school nutrition
4 staff is there dressed up as superheroes as well,
5 and they play games and win prizes and they've
6 got some physical activity stuff.

7 Of course, they all enjoy a healthy
8 breakfast together, and they get to talk to the
9 families and to the kids about why a daily
10 breakfast is important for their bodies and for
11 their academic success.

12 Through USDA's local school wellness
13 policy schools are required to engage parents,
14 students, and community members in the annual
15 development and assessment of local school
16 wellness policies.

17 So these policies guide a school
18 district's efforts and part of that is to set the
19 stage for their nutrition education. States and
20 local communities have the flexibility to develop
21 a policy that best works for them, but we, of
22 course, want to support them in those efforts,

1 and so Team Nutrition developed a local wellness
2 policy toolkit that is available online, and a
3 lot of this is grab-and-go content that they can
4 customize for their school district or their
5 school.

6 And so examples of who you would
7 engage, and when you are, again, talking about
8 the larger community, school nurses, PE teachers,
9 the school principal, teachers, you want to have
10 buy-in on all levels and you want everybody to
11 know how they can be a part of making sure that
12 the school environment is healthy for all
13 students.

14 These are some examples of the content
15 that is provided through the digital toolkit and
16 I thought would be a good slide to end on because
17 it reminds us that we are all part of the larger
18 community that is impacting the school
19 environment for our kids across the country.

20 So hopefully this quick overview gave
21 you all a better understanding of Team Nutrition
22 and the work we do and specifically how we are

1 supporting and increased consumption of fruits
2 and vegetables in the K through 12 setting.

3 In summary, we provide high-quality
4 nutrition education materials free of charge to
5 schools that participate in our programs and we
6 seek to address the whole environment in the
7 school setting from all angles.

8 Oh, and one last thing I wanted to
9 also say, I didn't create a slide for it, but to
10 mention that we do all this great work at the
11 national level but there is so much great work
12 happening at the local level, too, and we support
13 that work through Team Nutrition training grants.

14 And so the applications for this next
15 grant cycle are due on May 22nd, but we are
16 expected to award up to \$5.6 million to State
17 agencies so that they can help train their staff,
18 help implement nutrition education efforts, and
19 so there is a lot of great ways that the local
20 States have been using this funding for a number
21 of years and we want to encourage and continue to
22 do that.

1 So I am happy to address any questions
2 that you all have now. My colleague, Erin Healy,
3 is going to follow up and speak about Farm to
4 School Programs, so I can jump back up and answer
5 questions after her as well.

6 MS. KNORR: Anyone have any questions
7 or comments?

8 MS. BALCH: This is Christie Balch.
9 Thanks so much for your presentation. I have a
10 couple questions.

11 So the first is do you have a rough
12 percentage of like what's the percentage eligible
13 schools that participate in Team Nutrition?

14 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: I think it's about
15 50 percent currently. So, of course, there are
16 schools that do not participate in the USDA
17 school lunch and school breakfast program --

18 MS. BALCH: Right.

19 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: -- but we are at
20 about 50 percent right now.

21 MS. BALCH: Okay.

22 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: So we could

1 definitely use to get more awareness out there.

2 MS. BALCH: What are the barriers that
3 prevent you from being higher?

4 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Probably, let's see,
5 I think awareness is probably one of them. I
6 think there is some States who get more education
7 funding, so they might not think that they need
8 to look for free resources.

9 But just because they have the money
10 to go buy nutrition education resources doesn't
11 mean that they are getting the quality ones, if
12 that makes sense.

13 So even the schools where funding is
14 not a barrier could still benefit from learning
15 about our resources and utilizing them.

16 MS. BALCH: Great. And then a similar
17 question for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable
18 Program, what percent of eligible schools are a
19 part of that and then what are the barriers to
20 increasing -- I am guessing that one is more
21 funding related, but --

22 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Right. I don't know

1 the percent of that one but I am happy to look
2 into it and get back to you.

3 MS. BALCH: Great, thank you.

4 MS. DISOGRA: Sasha, can --

5 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Oh, you can.

6 MS. DISOGRA: Hi, it's Lorelei DiSogra

7 --

8 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Lorelei.

9 MS. BETTS: Lorelei, can you come up
10 to the mic, please.

11 (Off microphone comment.)

12 MS. DISOGRA: Hi. I am Lorelei
13 DiSogra from the United Fresh Produce
14 Association. It's great to see you all here and,
15 Sasha, you did a great job.

16 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Thank you.

17 MS. DISOGRA: And, also, I should just
18 say that Sasha was our liaison at the White House
19 for like the last year on Let's Move Salad Bars
20 to Schools, so we got to work with her really
21 closely.

22 For FFVP the program is funded this

1 year, this school year which is coming to an end,
2 at \$184.5 million. Yes, so that in most States
3 that funds the absolutely highest poverty
4 elementary schools in the State.

5 In many of those States, unless the
6 school is 90 to 95 percent free and reduced,
7 there isn't enough -- you know, that would be the
8 group that would be funded. There isn't enough
9 money to fund the schools from 50 percent on up.

10 So it is funding just really a small
11 amount of the total, even the total low income
12 elementary schools that could be funded. To fund
13 all of them, the last time I did the math, would
14 scare everybody, it was about \$2 billion.

15 So it's a good question, Christie.
16 You know, the Farm Bill is -- The FFVP is funded
17 in the Farm Bill and this would be the
18 opportunity to try to increase the funding for
19 the program.

20 So if you guys want to make that
21 recommendation I strongly support you. And I
22 guess there was one other, you had one other

1 question for FFVP, Christie?

2 MS. BALCH: Just what are the barriers
3 to increasing it?

4 MS. DISOGRA: The barriers are money.
5 I mean, you know, in every State there is a long
6 waiting list of schools that would like, even
7 very low income schools that would like to
8 participate, so the only barrier is federal
9 funding. Thank you.

10 MS. BALCH: Thanks.

11 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: That was a
12 lifesaver, thanks, Lorelei.

13 MS. DISOGRA: I'm always here to help
14 you, Sasha.

15 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Always. Any other
16 questions?

17 MS. KNORR: I have a quick question.
18 What kind of marketing activities do you do to
19 help reach out to the schools and that kind of
20 thing to let them know about this program and
21 what kind of parameters -- I don't know what kind
22 of parameters USDA has on allowable marketing

1 activities in terms of, you know, increasing
2 knowledge about the programs, but I think that
3 that's been kind of a consistent theme across
4 various programs in USDA.

5 You have wonderful programs but people
6 just don't know about them. So I am curious not
7 just about your particular program but in general
8 what are the marketing practices that USDA is
9 using to help increase awareness of these
10 wonderful resources for people?

11 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Yes, thanks for that
12 question. You know, at the USDA level as far as,
13 you know, what's allowable and what's not I
14 probably shouldn't speak that, I can follow up
15 with you, but I can just say for our program we
16 definitely leverage a lot of different channels.

17 So social media is one that is great
18 and that's free, so we have a Team Nutrition
19 Twitter account and we share messages that way,
20 promote our resources that way.

21 A lot of what we do to get the word
22 out is conferences. So Team Nutrition

1 specifically attends a lot of conferences
2 throughout the year, so we've got, you know, the
3 Food Nutrition Conference, which is the big one
4 with registered dietitians, we've got the School
5 Nutrition Association, the Society of Nutrition
6 Education Behavior, we go to PTA, we are going to
7 the School Nurses Association, we were accepted
8 to speak at that one at the end of June.

9 So we try to get into -- And Shape
10 America is another one that is big with physical
11 education PE educators. So we try to hit, you
12 know, not just in the nutrition bubble, but try
13 to hit outside that kind of primary bubble as
14 well so that we are talking to folks in all
15 sectors.

16 So I think that's a primary channel.
17 So through the expo, you know, exhibit hall
18 booth, and through presentations that we give at
19 various conferences is a great way to promote.

20 MS. KNORR: So aside from the PTA is
21 there any way that you reach out to parents to
22 help let them know about these programs? I think

1 that's one avenue to, you know, encourage schools
2 to participate in these things.

3 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Yes, that's a great
4 question. At the national office, you know, I
5 think it would be hard-pressed to say that we are
6 direct to parents.

7 You know, I'm trying to think of
8 examples where that might be the case. We have
9 strong relationships at the national office child
10 nutrition programs with the regional USDA offices
11 and so we have liaisons at the regional offices
12 who are then working with the States and it kind
13 of filters down that way.

14 You know, is there room for
15 improvement in more direct communication?
16 Probably, but that's kind of how the setup is
17 right now.

18 MS. KNORR: Great, thanks so much.
19 Anybody else have any other questions?

20 MR. VAZQUEZ: Hi, Sasha, this is Jorge
21 Vazquez with Latin Specialties.

22 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Hi.

1 MR. VAZQUEZ: Thank you for your
2 wonderful presentation. Do you have any
3 statistics on the average cost of a school meal
4 and what percentage of that would go for fresh
5 fruits and vegetables?

6 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Yes, percentage that
7 goes to fresh fruit and vegetables I don't know,
8 and I was just looking at the allowed
9 reimbursement rates for lunches earlier. I'm
10 trying to see if I have it in front of me.

11 I don't have it in front of me so I
12 will have to follow up with you on that, but it's
13 not a lot. It's, you know, we're talking under
14 \$3 for lunch and that's for a free meal, and that
15 would be, the reimbursement I think is \$2-
16 something.

17 I can follow up with specifics and
18 share with the group, but, you know, it's a small
19 budget.

20 MS. KOVACS: From my former job
21 working in Farm to School the number that we had
22 school nutrition directors telling us was that

1 they had about 20 to 30 cents per meal for the
2 side produce, which was the fresh produce in our
3 conversation, and that was even a little bit
4 high, that was if they are pushing it a little
5 bit.

6 (Off microphone comment.)

7 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Yes, and I don't
8 think at the -- Go ahead, Lorelei.

9 (Off microphone comments.)

10 MS. DISOGRA: Yes, so it's pretty
11 consistent that schools budget between 20 and 30
12 cents for each serving of the fruit and
13 vegetable.

14 So, you know, right now they have to
15 do a fruit and a vegetable and that amount
16 increases as the kids, you know, go from
17 elementary, middle school, and high school.

18 So right now most schools budget
19 someplace between 20 and 30 cents. So since they
20 have to serve both the fruit and a vegetable and
21 they are supposed to be doubling consumption, you
22 know, you have to times that by two, yes.

1 MS. KOVACS: Thanks.

2 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Yes, and so, of
3 course, we don't regulate how they divide out
4 their budget at the national level, so that's
5 kind of up to the local school district and
6 school to kind of figure out how they are going
7 to divide out their budget, but that's great
8 insights.

9 And Erin probably has some great
10 information, too, about how local foods can help
11 with their fruit and vegetable budget. Okay, I
12 will pass the mic to Erin, but, again, if there
13 is any other question I'm happy to pop back up
14 after.

15 MS. KNORR: Fantastic. Thank you so
16 much, Sasha.

17 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Thank you all.

18 MS. KNORR: And next up we have Erin
19 Healy to speak to us a little bit about the Farm
20 to School Programs.

21 MS. HEALY: Thank you. Can everyone
22 hear me? Yes. My name is Erin. I am really new

1 to USDA. I have only been here about 2-1/2
2 months, I am the new Director of the Office of
3 Community Food Systems.

4 My background is mostly non-profit
5 work. I was a Farm to School manager at one
6 point, but public health, international, domestic
7 work, and then I moved into the food realm about
8 nine years ago and worked on school gardens, Farm
9 to School, food justice, and local food system
10 and food policy change work, but I am here today
11 to talk about Farm to School.

12 So our work in our office has three
13 main pillars. So we have a grant program, we
14 provide training and technical assistance, and
15 then we also do research and data collection, so
16 I will talk to you about those three pillars of
17 work.

18 And just to give some background,
19 because I do get a lot of questions about what's
20 going to happen to our program. So our program
21 is protected, it's a congressional mandate, it
22 was through the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of

1 2010, that we get \$5 million every year to give
2 out in grants from Congress and that has to be
3 spread equally across the nation, across urban
4 and rural areas, and goes mostly to schools for
5 planning, implementation, and training around
6 Farm to School.

7 So I have mostly pictures in my
8 presentation because this work lends itself
9 really well to great pictures. But Farm to
10 School includes lots of different activities,
11 it's not just incorporating more local foods in
12 the school lunch program, it's anything that goes
13 along with the education around where the food
14 comes from.

15 So the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable
16 Program, for instance, providing snacks, that
17 could be a locally-procured snack, a farmer
18 coming in to talk to kids in the classroom about
19 where their food comes from or what their daily
20 work is like, getting kids to try new types of
21 produce and foods through school gardening
22 programs, nutrition education in the classroom,

1 going out to visit farms.

2 So this is a great picture because it
3 is showing the corn, you know, in its natural
4 state, it's not already shucked, so that's just a
5 fun activity for kids to start understanding the
6 natural state of their foods.

7 And these are actual school lunch
8 photographs, and you can see how nice they look
9 and when you are able to really incorporate some
10 fresh, locally harvested produce it really makes
11 a difference with what the meal looks like and
12 how appealing it is for kids.

13 As I mentioned, school gardens is a
14 big component of our work, so getting kids
15 outside, getting them excited about where their
16 food comes from, them understanding the full life
17 cycle of a plant, being able to see what they
18 grew in the garden actually go into the salad
19 bar.

20 Research has shown that this really
21 increases consumption in kids' willingness to try
22 new foods and be excited about eating healthy.

1 And Sasha mentioned in one of her
2 slides the need to cut fruits up, especially for
3 smaller kids, so any type of tactile hands-on
4 education and activities around local produce and
5 getting them to just handle the food a little bit
6 more and be more comfortable with different types
7 of fruits and vegetables helps.

8 So this is an example of kids going
9 out to visit a farm and seeing where their food
10 comes from and talking to the farmer.

11 So we did some research, and I will go
12 into more depth into our census, but some of the
13 benefits that school food service directors have
14 mentioned is that kids are more willing to try
15 new foods when there is a Farm to School program
16 in place.

17 There is an increased consumption of
18 fruits and vegetables and there is an improved
19 knowledge and awareness regarding where their
20 food comes from.

21 And there have been some studies that
22 have even linked school garden programs, for

1 instance, to higher test scores and improved
2 behavior in the classroom.

3 Summer is a great opportunity for more
4 Farm to School efforts, and this is something
5 where we have been trying to work on and focus on
6 more in the last couple of years.

7 As you can imagine most of the country
8 summer is when especially produce harvest is at
9 its best and that's when school is out, so we are
10 trying to incorporate or really weave Farm to
11 School efforts into summer meal distribution as
12 well.

13 And this is also a great opportunity
14 for local producers to have an increased market
15 opportunity and I think, again, exposing kids at
16 younger ages has increased markets throughout the
17 life cycle of consumers.

18 So the same goes for pre-K, we are
19 trying to do more to get Farm to School rolled
20 all the way down into pre-K settings. Studies,
21 again, have shown that the earlier you introduce
22 young children to new foods the more willing they

1 are to try different foods and the more willing
2 they are to eat healthy diets throughout their
3 life.

4 One of our priority areas, especially
5 in our grant program, is working with tribal
6 communities. So they are a priority applicant in
7 our grant program, but tribal communities have a
8 lot of questions about incorporating local foods
9 as it pertains to their particular culture and
10 their geography, so we do a lot of training and
11 technical assistance around these types of
12 questions.

13 We have a toolkit and we have a fact
14 sheet on our website. It's particularly
15 important for these communities to be able to
16 incorporate this very culturally-appropriate
17 food, such as bison and wild rice and certain
18 traditional and heirloom varieties of corn and
19 squash, and that is all allowed and encouraged.

20 And Farm to School is very important
21 for these communities because it's also a way to
22 connect kids with their history, their culture,

1 the way ancestors used to eat, and passing on the
2 knowledge of how to preserve those varieties of
3 fruits and vegetables, how to prepare those types
4 of foods.

5 So I mentioned earlier research is one
6 main pillar of our work and we do this in a few
7 different ways. We conducted a Farm to School
8 census in 2013 and then again in 2015 and the
9 census went out to school food service directors
10 but through the State agency and questions were
11 answered at the district level.

12 We got a great response rate, 72
13 percent actually responded to the survey, and of
14 that 72 percent 42 percent said they participated
15 in some type of Farm to School activity.

16 So, again, that includes school
17 garden, nutrition education, farmers coming in,
18 going out to the farms, actually increasing local
19 food in the school meals, and that doesn't just
20 have to be produce, it could be meat, it could be
21 seafood, it could be grains.

22 So the census of all of the people

1 that responded, it represented over 5000
2 districts, 42,000 schools, and over 23 million
3 children.

4 It was self-reported data, but school
5 food service directors did say that in total they
6 spent over \$789 million on local products, and
7 that was in 2013.

8 Over 7000 school gardens were counted,
9 but we actually think that's an underestimate,
10 it's probably many more, so we are thinking about
11 gearing up for our next census, which will
12 probably happen in 2019, but we are thinking
13 through a lot of the research collection and
14 making sure that we are going to be able to
15 collect the most accurate data, because we are
16 always asked these difficult questions about
17 percentages and numbers and it's just very
18 challenging to get some of that data because each
19 school district is different and they are not
20 standardized in terms of the type of information
21 they are collecting and how they are collecting
22 it.

1 But we did find -- So going back to
2 the benefits listed by the survey respondents,
3 and this was really interesting because, again,
4 we hear a lot of about food waste and we hear the
5 myths that increasing fruit and vegetables at
6 school lunches increases food waste, but actually
7 with Farm to School we found that when a school
8 has a program in place food waste is actually
9 reduced.

10 So 18 percent said that they noticed
11 a reduction in food waste when they started
12 incorporating local and fresh foods.

13 Lower school program meal costs, this
14 is another myth, oh, it will be more expensive if
15 we use local food. Not necessarily. If it is in
16 season a lot of times it's even cheaper than
17 imported produce.

18 So these are some of the things that
19 we do in our training and technical assistance is
20 to help those doing procurement to understand
21 that these are myths and that's not always true
22 and we help them understand the regulations and

1 how to source locally within the regulations.

2 I always like to include this slide
3 because I think it's really important to show how
4 much interest and support and buy-in there is for
5 Farm to School.

6 This is an easy win for everyone.
7 It's one of the feel good stories that is never
8 contentious. I mean everyone, no matter what
9 side they are coming from, loves Farm to School.

10 The schools are buying into it, the
11 schools want to be doing more. It's just the
12 question of there is limited support, there is
13 limited funding available.

14 So we only have \$5 million a year to
15 give out in grants for the entire country, and
16 there is an overwhelming demand for these
17 programs.

18 There is also an overwhelming demand
19 for more data. this is a fairly new topic,
20 probably in the last ten years. Our office is
21 only five years old and data collection,
22 especially nationwide, it's a huge lift and we

1 only have five staff, half of whom are new at our
2 national office, and we have seven regional leads
3 out in the different regional offices.

4 So it's a lot of work and we do need
5 additional support from stakeholders to be doing
6 the data collection and to be providing support
7 to stakeholders around Farm to School.

8 So this data does not include our
9 current grant cycle, which we just finished
10 selection but it's not yet ready to be announced,
11 it's not yet approved.

12 So this was just from the beginning of
13 Farm to School from this office and the grant
14 program up until the last fiscal year. So we
15 funded over 300 projects in all States, D.C., and
16 the Virgin Islands, we actually will be funding
17 Puerto Rico this year as well, and we distributed
18 \$20 million in funding.

19 But just to give you an indication of
20 the demand versus supply, there were over 1300
21 applications asking for almost \$100 million. So
22 we're really only able to meet 21 percent of the

1 demand for this grant program.

2 And we fund planning grants, we fund
3 training and implementation. We fund schools,
4 non-profits, State agencies, tribal groups, and
5 producers.

6 And I should mention to you all that
7 producers are among the lowest rates of
8 applications that we receive. I don't know if
9 they just aren't aware that they are eligible for
10 these grants or if they are being funneled to
11 other parts of USDA for grants, but that is an
12 applicant poll we are always looking to increase,
13 to spread the word about our RFA among producers.

14 So in this current fiscal year we
15 received 1609 applications requesting \$117
16 million and, again, we only are able to give out
17 \$5 million.

18 These are some examples of some
19 programs we have funded. So this is Edible
20 Schoolyard in New Orleans. Has anyone heard of
21 Edible Schoolyard?

22 (No audible response.)

1 MS. HEALY: Okay. So it was started
2 by a chef in the Bay Area and it now has
3 affiliates in different cities throughout the
4 country and she basically turned a blighted
5 schoolyard into a huge, beautiful, edible garden
6 that incorporated that produce into the school
7 lunch program.

8 So now they are trying to do this in
9 different cities. This is in New Orleans so they
10 want to grant from us to basically roll out
11 something very similar in New Orleans at a school
12 that had a high rate of free and reduced price
13 lunches.

14 So they incorporated school gardens
15 and they had both students, teachers, and parents
16 working in the garden to incorporate that produce
17 into the school meals.

18 This is an example from Vermont, they
19 were a grantee, and you can see this is a really
20 beautiful school lunch, it's very colorful, lots
21 of variety, and this is incorporating a lot of
22 local produce.

1 So I think a lot of times school lunch
2 gets a really bad rep and I like to show pictures
3 like this because I would pay for this, I would
4 totally eat this lunch. I think it looks great.

5 And so there is a lot of food service
6 directors that just need that extra support to
7 incorporate some local and fresh produce into the
8 school lunches, but they are very interested,
9 they are very committed to this, to making this
10 food look appealing, and students really react to
11 this.

12 So they incorporated -- They actually
13 hired a Farm to School coordinator and they
14 incorporated not only an increase in local food
15 procurement but they weaved it throughout the
16 curricula in the school as well.

17 And this is a final example, this was
18 a planning grantee in New Jersey, and we offer
19 planning grants because we understand that it's
20 very difficult to suddenly jump into
21 implementation and sometimes schools or non-
22 profits need some extra help and some staff time

1 to be freed up to do the research of finding
2 local foods and finding producers and
3 distributors, to developing new recipes, to
4 talking to different parts of the administration
5 within a school to make sure that this works.

6 And we prioritize grants that work
7 with multiple schools or districts or even multi-
8 State grants. We definitely want to have the
9 most reach as possible for a grant program.

10 So the third pillar of our work as I
11 mentioned is training and technical assistance
12 and we do this in a variety of ways.

13 We have a lot of toolkits and fact
14 sheets on our website. We receive a lot of
15 questions, especially as it pertains to USDA
16 regulations in the school meal program, so these
17 fact sheets are directly responding to the
18 majority or the most common questions that we
19 receive.

20 We do in-person trainings, especially
21 around local procurement. We have a Farm to
22 School planning toolkit that has a 11 modules and

1 walks grantees or stakeholders through an entire
2 process of how to start a Farm to School Program.

3 We also do webinars, so we have a
4 whole series of webinars that are available on
5 our website of well.

6 And if you are curious about who we
7 are we are five people at the national office and
8 we have seven regional leads located throughout
9 the country and they are really the boots on the
10 ground, they are going to the local conferences
11 and workshops and trainings and meetings and they
12 are doing a lot of the connecting and the
13 partnership building and training and technical
14 assistance.

15 We have an e-newsletter if you are
16 interested, it's called The Dirt, and our website
17 is USDA.gov/farmentoschool, and as I mentioned
18 earlier we always need help promoting our
19 resources and our RFA among produce groups
20 specifically. That's it. Thank you.

21 (Applause.)

22 MS. KNORR: Thank you, Erin. Does

1 anybody have any questions or comments for Erin?

2 MS. HERRON: Sorry, me again, Johanna
3 Herron. I have a strong appreciation for
4 everything you just spoke about. My past life
5 was Farm to School, I ran the State program in
6 Alaska and my Master's degree looked at using
7 Farm to School as a health promotion strategy,
8 and so I have nothing but complete support for
9 that as a strategy, I think it does amazing
10 things.

11 My question is when you are
12 sustaining, and I understand that part of the
13 sustaining of the Farm to School grant program is
14 that a school would receive money and build a
15 relationship, and so when the funds are gone they
16 hopefully can maintain those relationships, but
17 often you do find that they struggle with after
18 the money is gone they can't continue forward
19 with some of that because it is a challenge, they
20 are more likely to sustain it if they are plugged
21 into the State programs that are around that have
22 been around longer than the USDA grant program,

1 and just like NFSN, for example, the National
2 Farm to School Network, is great for having
3 evaluation success with those kinds of programs,
4 is there any goal or thought about having an
5 accreditation system or possibly using the census
6 data, I know a lot of censuses are used to
7 determine, especially crop funds for a State, for
8 example, is there any goal to moving that
9 direction with Farm to School?

10 MS. HEALY: Not that I know of but I
11 will mention that State agencies were a priority
12 in our last funding cycle and we will continue to
13 keep that in the next funding cycle because we
14 understood that that helped with capacity
15 building and sustainability.

16 So that will continue to be a strategy
17 but I don't have any information beyond that.

18 MR. NICHOLSON: A question, this is
19 Mark Nicholson. The Child Nutrition Re-
20 Authorization that is coming up is --

21 MS. HEALY: I don't think there are
22 any plans for it any time soon. That would

1 probably be at least a year or two, I think,
2 before we hear anything about that. So we have
3 just been on a continuing resolution this whole
4 time.

5 MR. NICHOLSON: Are these programs
6 managed by that or impacted by that?

7 MS. HEALY: We are under the Child
8 Nutrition Re-Authorization, but because we are a
9 congressionally mandated program we will continue
10 to receive the same budget every year.

11 We will continue to be able to do our
12 work. If there are drastic changes in the future
13 I don't know how that might impact our work, but
14 I don't think we are going to see that come to
15 Congress for a while.

16 I think there may be some impacts
17 within the next Farm Bill, we are waiting to see
18 what might happen with that.

19 MS. KNORR: Any others with questions
20 or comments?

21 (No audible response.)

22 MS. HEALY: Thank you.

1 MS. KNORR: Thank you. I'd like to
2 turn it over a little bit to Christie for a few
3 moments to share a little bit, the working group
4 on Produce Consumption did get together since our
5 last meeting. So, Christie, if you can bring us
6 up to speed on the conversations there.

7 MS. BALCH: Sure. So in February --
8 And if anyone wants to see notes from any of
9 these past meetings I am happy to share them. In
10 February we heard from Dave Tuckwiller of AMS's
11 Commodity Procurement Program and that is where
12 we learned about how AMS buys a lot of produce
13 for schools and a lot of other places as well and
14 that USDA is looking for more produce suppliers.

15 And we also learned about DoD's Fresh
16 Produce Program and we learned a little bit about
17 the USDA's Unprocessed Fresh Fruit and Vegetable
18 pilot program.

19 So we might want to discuss those a
20 little bit more, but I don't know, I don't have
21 that many details on them. I'm not sure if I am
22 the right person, so I will just kind of run

1 through what we have done and then we can discuss
2 it a little bit more.

3 And we also heard from Cathy, who is
4 on our Committee, about PMA's Eat Brighter
5 campaign, which is what they use Sesame Street
6 characters to market produce.

7 So that was our February meeting and
8 I think we came out that with not really any
9 recommendation ideas but just learned a lot,
10 which was great.

11 And then in March we heard from Sasha
12 Bard Chamberlain, who is from FNS, and a lot of
13 it was what we just heard about Team Nutrition
14 and all the resources that they provide for free
15 to schools that participate in the National
16 School Lunch Program, and then I think just
17 adding on to that more today about the Fresh
18 Fruit and Vegetable Program.

19 So those are the things that we are
20 sort of up to speed on, but some of the
21 recommendation ideas that have been floating
22 around are things like how to help facilitate

1 more outreach about some of the existing
2 resources, like Team Nutrition. That's all I
3 have for now.

4 MS. KNORR: Yes, thank you, Christie.
5 I think here is definitely some opportunity. I
6 don't know if the group wants to take just a
7 couple of minutes now or if we want to set some
8 time aside tomorrow to come together and discuss,
9 you know, what kind of a recommendation can we
10 actually formulate.

11 Just talking with my co-chair, you
12 know, certainly putting together some kind of a
13 recommendation in support of Farm to School or
14 even a statement of the importance of Farm to
15 School with its clear impacts on increasing
16 consumption of fruits and vegetables could also
17 be an opportunity there.

18 So I am going to ask for feedback from
19 all of you whether you want to tackle that, you
20 know, just briefly now or just wait until
21 tomorrow to really get into the nitty-gritty.

22 MS. BALCH: I did want to just ask a

1 kind of clarifying question. So we heard the
2 comment about how the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable
3 Program is funded through the Farm Bill and my
4 understanding is that this Committee can't really
5 make recommendations about that, it's more like
6 what the USDA staff can implement. Can you
7 clarify that a little bit more?

8 MS. KNORR: I think that's a question
9 for Melissa and Marlene.

10 (Laughter.)

11 MS. BAILEY: Thanks, Beth. This is
12 Melissa. Yes, I mean I think what we were
13 focusing on in the Subcommittee and, you know, in
14 terms of advisory committees in general, it's
15 often the easiest path to affect change is the
16 things that we have under our direct purview,
17 right, and at the Department those are going to
18 be things we can do often administratively to
19 improve program efficiency.

20 One conversation that came up with
21 respect to this Subcommittee, or Working Group,
22 was, you know, Ag Marketing Service has a pretty

1 big reach when it comes to stakeholders and doing
2 outreach and whether some of the work that FNS
3 has done on Team Nutrition could be pushed out
4 through the fact that we have this huge
5 stakeholder base and maybe they are just not
6 aware, as you heard, of the information, only 50
7 percent of those eligible are participating.

8 So that's something -- Again, that's
9 sort of like the path of least resistance, things
10 we can get done and deliver on. When it comes to
11 Farm Bill things it's just a more challenging
12 landscape because they are not within our direct
13 control as the Department.

14 I mean as you know that is Congress is
15 developing kind of what their priorities might be
16 and certainly that is influenced by the landscape
17 we operate in, but a much more difficult path.

18 MR. NICHOLSON: Mark Nicholson here.
19 But it's in our purview to emphasize areas that
20 we as an industry want to see supported, correct,
21 so that if we find these areas of great interest
22 to the industry we can do a supportive, positive

1 statement on that and encourage AMS to find ways
2 to support those programs, is that reasonable?

3 MS. BAILEY: I think it's reasonable.
4 I think that it just needs to come with the
5 understanding that, you know, we can carry that
6 message as through the charter up through our
7 Under Secretary for marketing regulatory programs
8 and I think it does help to understand where the
9 industry is on many of these programs, which are
10 set up through, of course, the Farm Bill and the
11 budget process, but at the same time an
12 understanding that we don't always directly
13 control the outcomes of that process, that
14 sometimes it does take Congress to weigh in and
15 we are not them, so -- Yes?

16 MS. KNORR: I do think given that, you
17 know, our recommendations go to the Secretary it
18 is very important for us to let the Secretary
19 know what we feel is of value to the industry
20 regardless of what that, you know, implies for
21 the Farm Bill.

22 If we let the Secretary know that

1 these kinds of programs and these efforts have a
2 real impact on farmers and, you know, the
3 businesses that operate with fruits and
4 vegetables in our industry, I think that that's
5 something that we are obligated to do.

6 We have been invited here to share our
7 opinions and, you know, for better or worse, we
8 can offer them. So I think it's important for us
9 to take advantage of doing that.

10 And, of course, we understand that the
11 Farm Bill process is a long, complicated process,
12 but if we don't let the Secretary know what's
13 important to us as an industry then there is, you
14 know, no chance that those are going to be
15 supported long term. So that's just my two cents
16 on that.

17 So right now it's about 20 after 2, so
18 we are a little bit ahead of schedule. I don't
19 know how people are feeling, if you all want to
20 take a quick break, maybe.

21 I was going to suggest getting a cup
22 of coffee, but, you know, maybe running upstairs

1 to get a cup of coffee, or taking a break, or if
2 you want to just power through and, you know,
3 maybe end a little bit earlier today. Thoughts?

4 Break, all right. Okay, let's say
5 about -- let's say 15 minutes.

6 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
7 went off the record at 2:23 p.m. and resumed at
8 2:52 p.m.)

9 MS. KNORR: Okay, so the next working
10 committee that we're going to hear from is the
11 Research and Grants working group. And Roland,
12 once again, is the Chairperson of that. Roland
13 is, you know --

14 (Off microphone comment.)

15 MS. KNORR: So Roland, I don't know if
16 you want to update folks on your conversations
17 before we get into our speakers, or if you want
18 us to just plow ahead with our speakers.

19 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Yes, maybe it might
20 be helpful just in terms of setting stage for our
21 speakers. So yes, so the research grants and
22 infrastructure working group, you know, has been

1 again a part of our sort of portfolio of working
2 groups since 2015 when we reconstituted this
3 committee.

4 And our past, you know, our previous
5 recommendations that came out of this working
6 group and past and accepted by the full committee
7 in the past have been around two issues. One has
8 been the support and investment in public
9 breeding for regionally adapted plant varieties.

10 I mean, we just, we know how critical
11 that is for growers across the country to have
12 fruit and vegetable varieties that are adapted to
13 the climate conditions and pest pressures that
14 exist in specific regions.

15 And you know, that this is critical
16 for the continued growth of the fruit and
17 vegetable industry that public plant breeding
18 programs that are focused on regional varieties,
19 you know, continue to thrive.

20 There's been a lot of atrophy of the
21 university systems' capacity to, you know, the
22 number of plant breeders is going down, the

1 number of plant breeding programs is going down.
2 I don't know if you just saw, I mean, I can't
3 tell, does UC Davis have a strawberry breeding
4 program or not? You know, maybe they do, maybe
5 they only do if they need to sue an exhibit
6 faculty member.

7 So you know, but the point is it's a
8 primary area of concern for our industry. So
9 we've made recommendations on this in the past.
10 The other has been around enhanced coordination
11 of the USDA and interagency response to exotic
12 plant pest problems.

13 And really, our key recommendation has
14 been having one point of contact, one agency
15 within APHIS in all likelihood that is
16 responsible for coordinating across multiple
17 agencies the response to novel plant pests when
18 they're developed.

19 And you know, our cautionary tale that
20 drove this area of recommendation was of course
21 citrus greening and just the very long, long lag
22 time between identifying it's a problem and

1 marshaling resources to actually address it.

2 And now, you know, that horse is out
3 of the barn by a long shot, and our Florida
4 citrus industry has been devastated by that. So
5 that is the areas that have been the subject of
6 our recommendations in the past.

7 The issue of fruit and vegetable
8 marketing infrastructure has been added to our
9 portfolio really from the perspective that, you
10 know, it's also a grant. Often there are grant
11 funding opportunities for enhancing fruit and
12 vegetable distribution infrastructure, and so
13 that made sense for us to incorporate into our
14 work plan as well.

15 So we got presentations in our working
16 group meeting, and I don't remember the dates and
17 I don't have the minutes in front of me. But we
18 had a conference call where we got, we had two
19 conference calls to set an agenda for speakers
20 and then when we actually got some speakers from
21 AFIS who gave us an update, it's pretty similar
22 to the update that we received back in our

1 September meeting in terms of the status of the
2 response to our recommendations as far as
3 enhancing coordination and again, accountability
4 for responding to that.

5 But we wanted to have it in terms of
6 presenting information to the full committee
7 here, we wanted to try to get speakers to address
8 again, the plant breeding priorities and that's
9 why we've got Dr. Kaleikau. Thank you, all
10 right, good, here to speak with us to give us an
11 update on funding priorities with respect to
12 plant breeding, genetics, and genomics.

13 And then here from both USDA Rural
14 Development and AMS on varieties of
15 infrastructure grants and funding available
16 through USDA programs to promote market
17 infrastructure.

18 So I'm looking forward to our
19 speakers, and we'll look forward to your comments
20 back about any next areas of response that are
21 committee can continue to look at.

22 MS. KNORR: Thank you for setting the

1 stage for us, Roland. And so our first speaker
2 on these topics is Ed Kaleikau from NIFA. Thank
3 you so much for joining us this afternoon.

4 MR. KALEIKAU: Well, thank you for
5 having me today. It's a real pleasure to be
6 here. Again, my name is Ed Kaleikau, I'm a
7 National Program Leader with USDA's National
8 Institute of Food and Agriculture.

9 Been with the Agency for a long, long
10 time, back when it was CSRS, CSRES, now NIFA. So
11 I've seen the evolution over time. I've seen
12 some of the changes that have occurred in the
13 science, particularly in the area of genomics,
14 genetics, and breeding which is my background.

15 So really what I wanted to try to
16 accomplish today was to just give the group a
17 broad brush stroke of what NIFA is doing in the
18 area of genomics, genetics, and breeding with
19 some emphasis more on the breeding component
20 since that's really what this group is interested
21 in.

22 A lot of the work that I'm going to

1 present, again, is just a brush stroke, but it
2 represents work that we do collegially with other
3 national program leaders there at NIFA that
4 include my colleagues Shing Kwok, Liang-Shiou
5 Lin, Jeff Steiner, Mat Ngouajio who runs our
6 organic research and extension initiative, as
7 well as Tom Bewick which I hope many of you know
8 runs our specialty crops research initiative.

9 And if he hasn't spoken to this group,
10 I think it would be good to have Tom come in and
11 address the group.

12 So again, I'm going to give you a
13 broad brush stroke of what NIFA does. So we
14 have, within NIFA there are four institutes,
15 there are the bio energy, climate, and
16 environment food production and sustainability
17 which is the one that I'm in.

18 Each of the institutes has their own
19 deputy director. Another one is the Youth Family
20 and Community, and the International Programs
21 Centers. And there's also Food Safety and
22 Nutrition which didn't make it up on the slide

1 because it's covered by some other words up
2 there.

3 But you know, within NIFA we have
4 about 300 employees. It's led by Sonny Ramaswamy
5 who has been our director for the last three to
6 four years. He's been quite effective, very
7 dynamic speaker. And he's really pushed us, I
8 think, to the next level on where we need to be.

9 So just briefly, what NIFA's mission
10 and vision is, we consider ourselves USDA's
11 primary extramural agency to advance food and
12 agricultural sciences. So we don't conduct
13 research as I think you know. We fund research,
14 and we consider ourselves to be a science agency.

15 And our national program leaders and
16 staff, we lead and fund a variety of different
17 initiatives. And over the last I would say five
18 years, we've really heard from our stakeholders
19 that plant breeding is a priority for the exact
20 same reasons that were spoken a little bit
21 earlier, the downsizing of plant breeding
22 programs at land grant universities, the fewer

1 plant breeders that are coming out of programs
2 because there aren't programs to train them.

3 So we have tried to get our programs
4 aligned with what our stakeholders believe are
5 important. So we fund initiatives that ensure
6 the long term viability of agriculture. We
7 support research, education, and extension
8 activities.

9 We partner with institutions across
10 the US and globally. One of our major partners
11 of course is the land grant university system.
12 We also provide support for, work with other
13 universities, colleges, governments.

14 One of our main government research
15 agencies is the agricultural research service
16 which is a real good coordinating opportunity for
17 our, to work within their strategic goals. We
18 work with other governments, private, and non-
19 profit organizations. We're a \$1.5 billion
20 agency. But our major strength we see is really
21 connecting partnerships.

22 Okay, what do we do? NIFA provides

1 competitive grants. We provide support for
2 basic, from the very fundamental research to
3 applied research in the plant breeding area. We
4 really see our niche as focusing on the
5 translational transfer of information from the
6 basic sciences into application, into the
7 development of cultivars that growers can use,
8 farmers can grow.

9 And so that's where we see our niche.
10 There are other agencies that do more at the
11 front end work as I call it, the more basic work.
12 DOE, the Department of Energy, National Science
13 Foundation, we work with them as well, jointly.

14 So we integrate, we fund projects and
15 integrate research education and extension
16 functions. We also provide support for capacity
17 grants. And so those are distributed funds by
18 formula at the land grant universities, schools
19 of veterinary medicine, and other partners to
20 maintain the capacity to conduct research and
21 extension.

22 Twenty five percent of those funds go

1 to multi-state research committees, and I'll talk
2 a little bit more, give you a couple examples of
3 how we're targeting, or how the capacity funds
4 are being used to support plant breeding.

5 And then finally, we also have
6 programs and non-competitive grants which are
7 directed by Congress and were designated to
8 specific institutions.

9 So we cover many topics. I think
10 you're familiar with it, we cover advanced
11 technologies, education, we have an animal
12 breeding, animal health, animal production which
13 is really very similar to what we're doing in our
14 plant sciences programs as well.

15 We cover work in the environment,
16 climate, business economics, farming, and
17 ranching. There are other topics on food
18 science, natural resources, health, people,
19 international. We try to work across our
20 institutes where we see it feasible, able to do
21 that.

22 But today I want to focus on that last

1 one, plants and specifically plant breeding. So
2 we have a number of funding programs that can
3 make awards in plant breeding. I'll go over
4 that.

5 We feel that our stakeholders are very
6 important. They're the ones that help drive what
7 priorities we have set within our programs. Of
8 course, one of our limits is the limitation in
9 funding that we have.

10 Many of our competitive programs can
11 only fund in some cases five percent of the
12 awards, others are ten, fifteen percent. I would
13 say on average 15 percent. So you know, we build
14 up a lot of, there's a lot of momentum out there,
15 there's a lot of research capacity to get the
16 work done, but the funding isn't there to support
17 it.

18 Many of our success stories in plant
19 breeding are typically funded by a combination of
20 funding sources. So we don't say it's just NIFA,
21 of course not. I just said we don't have enough
22 funding to do it all. We work with other

1 agencies, DOE, NSF, and so forth, but we try to
2 target our money in areas that can meet our
3 mission goals.

4 So here is basically an outline of
5 what the portfolio, of how the portfolio is
6 developed. We believe that we're addressing
7 regional, national, and global needs, and that
8 primarily it must be in alignment with the 2014
9 Farm Bill, it must be in alignment with the USDA
10 RE Action Plan, it must be in alignment with our
11 internal NIFA strategic plan. And I'll show you
12 on the next slide what those priorities are.

13 And then again I said we work closely
14 with USDA ARS, particularly in the plant breeding
15 area because of the USDA ARS laboratories that
16 are working in genetic resources, genomics, and
17 genetic improvement.

18 So we believe our investments are
19 responsive to stakeholder critical needs. We
20 work hard to ensure that one of the areas that
21 we're trying to build on is trying to decrease
22 the time by which a variety is released. And

1 there are certain ways and methods that that can
2 be done.

3 So we support various innovative
4 breeding methods, we support work on data mining
5 from existing databases, we try to develop
6 bioinformatic tools. We support knowledge in
7 molecular and biological process because it all
8 feeds into the plant breeding process.

9 But ultimately, our goals are to
10 improve the production efficiency, yield
11 sustainability, resilience, helpfulness, product
12 quality, and value for US agricultural plants.

13 So this is the basic structure that we
14 build our priorities on. It goes by the Farm
15 Bill, 2014 Farm Bill, priority area and plant
16 health, and production of plant products. It had
17 seven areas that we wanted to try to target.

18 Again, there's limited funding to get
19 all of this done, but we have I think been very
20 successful in plant genome structure and
21 function. Probably ten years ago we emphasized
22 that component quite a bit, and it continued on.

1 We have now moved more into probably
2 sub-priority three which is conventional
3 breeding. We're focused more on cultivar and
4 breed development within our competitive programs
5 which we weren't doing prior to this.

6 We focus on work that targets
7 selection theory, applied quantitative genetics,
8 breeding for improved food quality, and so forth.
9 And then there are some other areas that are
10 targeted. But the main one is conventional
11 breeding for cultivar and breed development.

12 They have to align under the REE
13 action plan. I think all of you are aware that,
14 so REE is the Research, Education, and Economics
15 action plan. We assure that all of our
16 priorities fall under those sub little categories
17 there.

18 And then it must align under the
19 strategic plan goal one. So for NIFA. So
20 throughout the year we worked together as a
21 collaborative group to try to identify the
22 priorities within a given program area when it's

1 developed.

2 So here is just an example of what
3 we're currently doing in plant breeding. It
4 covers everything from applied plant breeding to
5 phenomics, high throughput phenotyping,
6 development of new technologies. It focuses on
7 developing varieties that improve, that show
8 improved resilience to climate change, drought,
9 extreme weather, so forth.

10 And then we also do a lot of work with
11 international agencies now. Again, stretching
12 our investments, leveraging what other groups can
13 do. We have on in the international wheat yield
14 partnership which we just initiated this year,
15 and that one focuses on breakthrough enabling
16 technologies such as gene editing and unmanned
17 aerial vehicles development of hybrid wheat.

18 So we're trying to break through on
19 some of, take advantage of the basic knowledge
20 that's been discovered over the years and
21 incorporated into our applied programs.

22 I'm not sure if you can see that very

1 well, but this is an example of an AFRI project
2 on national serial germplasm genotyping. It's
3 one of our large, multi-investigator, multi-
4 institutional grants. It was a \$25 million
5 project, it involved over 50 institutions
6 including ARS.

7 May of the land grant universities
8 that are involved in wheat and barley breeding,
9 they were able to release over 80 varieties in
10 germplasm lines from the coordination of this
11 group. They were able to train over 100 students
12 through their plant breeding training network.

13 So we were trying to target these
14 areas where stakeholders said we need to do a
15 better job at. And so by what we're finding is
16 that by providing funding in these, in this kind
17 of research, I think it's reinvigorating perhaps
18 administrations at the land grant universities
19 would say there is a place for plant breeding to
20 get additional funding from.

21 And so it's not a lot, but it's a good
22 start. Again, and this is just a brush stroke.

1 We have special research grants program in potato
2 breeding research which works with state,
3 federal, industry resources to accelerate the
4 development of superior performing varieties that
5 produce greater benefits to the potato industry.

6 We support multi state research
7 projects that bring together teams of
8 investigators that include the agriculture
9 experiment stations at land grant universities to
10 solve really complex problems.

11 So this is, you know, self-initiated
12 within the land grant system of experiment
13 stations. So examples are corn breeding research
14 where they're looking to facilitate multi-
15 location testing of breeding techniques.

16 Now, these multi state projects do not
17 necessarily fund research, but they help to
18 coordinate the research. And by better
19 coordination of the research, then the
20 researchers can come into our competitive grants
21 programs and other programs at NSF and DOE and so
22 forth.

1 Over I would say the last five years
2 we're starting to invest a little bit more into
3 database resources for crop genetics, genomics,
4 and breeding. The major players in that area
5 have always been NSF and DOE.

6 And so we're beginning to see that the
7 land grant system, the researchers would like to
8 see more of our resources perhaps targeted in
9 databases, particularly computational informatics
10 to tease out that information and use it for
11 breeding.

12 And then of course there's a specialty
13 crops research initiative that addresses critical
14 needs for the specialty crop industry. Tom
15 Bewick is our lead on this, and it was
16 authorized, initially authorized in the 2008 Farm
17 Bill.

18 There is a specific priority within
19 that competitive program on research and plant
20 breeding, genetics, and genomics to improve crop
21 characteristics, and there's a list of
22 characteristics that have been targeted.

1 Since 2012, SCRI has funded 31
2 projects. And I believe it's about 35 million
3 have gone into specifically research and plant
4 breeding, genetics, and genomics. Or of these 31
5 projects, they contained some component that's
6 related to breeding.

7 So a good example there is the
8 rosaceae breeding coordinated agricultural
9 project where they're looking at combining
10 disease resistance and horticultural quality and
11 new rosaceous cultivars. So again, it's bringing
12 the community of researchers involved in apple,
13 which are the rosaceae family, apple, blackberry,
14 peach, pear, rose, strawberry, sweet cherry, and
15 tart.

16 And they're working together and
17 sharing resources, building a database, using the
18 most modern genomic and genetic tools in order to
19 develop new varieties that are disease resistant
20 and market essential for horticultural quality.

21 It involves over 25 collaborators
22 across North America. It also includes

1 international researchers in Europe and
2 Australia. And through that sort of partnership
3 and funding that has been provided by NIFA and
4 many others, they're beginning to see a real I
5 think resurgence in this area of breeding,
6 particularly for these crops here.

7 So just a few potential future areas
8 of research. We see that there are still even
9 more enabling technologies that are coming out.
10 I had mentioned genome editing as one of them
11 where specific defined genetic changes can be
12 made, and it can be used to breed for nutritive
13 foods for human health benefits, crops that are
14 more tolerant to adverse environmental
15 conditions.

16 There's a lot of emphasis being shown
17 in remote sensing, unmanned aerial vehicles to
18 monitor traits in field plots to better generate
19 more germplasm testing and accelerate their
20 breeding schedule and improvement.

21 And then NIFA initiated a new
22 initiative called FACIT which is the Food and

1 Agriculture Cyber Informatics and Tools
2 initiative to again begin looking at big data,
3 having its impact within the breeding programs
4 that we're currently supporting.

5 So again, that's just a real brief
6 brush stroke of what we're doing. We're focusing
7 on sort of high throughput phenotyping and
8 genotyping technologies. We're supporting
9 training and workforce development of breeders,
10 we are supporting multi state coordination
11 projects as well as special grant projects.

12 And with that, I think I'll go ahead
13 and stop. I would be happy to take some
14 questions.

15 MS. KNORR: Does anybody have any
16 questions for Mr. Kaleikau?

17 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Doctor, thank you
18 very much for the presentation. I was wondering,
19 we sort of in our committee have sort of randomly
20 kind of dug through RFAs and RFA announcements to
21 kind of calculate dollars. Do you have, like,
22 current dollars maybe for the plant health RFAs

1 to sort of give an illustration of the trend of
2 dollars that are being spent on breeding programs
3 through various NIFA tracks?

4 MR. KALEIKAU: Yes, the funding that
5 is going into plant breeding and genetics has
6 been going up over the last three years. There
7 are reports that we have to provide to Congress
8 who are asking those exact same questions like
9 how are we redirecting funds to better support
10 plant breeding.

11 So we are doing that. In the AFRI
12 program, those who can remember, we supported
13 really big projects, the CAP projects. These are
14 multi, multi-million dollar. We now understand
15 that that may, that some of that funding could be
16 redirected to say smaller grants for single
17 investigators or smaller groups to work.

18 So I think we're finding that balance
19 between having large projects, small projects,
20 and the very large CAT projects will be fewer in
21 the coming years. And more of that will be
22 probably directed to smaller size projects.

1 MR. MCREYNOLDS: So there are, you
2 know, reports that have been shared with
3 Congress. I mean, I guess, you know, is there
4 information like that with the dollar amounts
5 just that we can sort of see these trend lines,
6 you know, the data itself?

7 MR. KALEIKAU: Yes.

8 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Terrific. We would
9 appreciate that if we could be --

10 (Simultaneous speaking.)

11 MR. KALEIKAU: So these reports are
12 given to the secretary who then reports out on
13 behalf of the Agency to Congress.

14 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Okay. So maybe that
15 would be something we can get our hands on.

16 MS. BETTS: Absolutely. You can send
17 them to me if that's public information. This is
18 Marlene.

19 MR. KALEIKAU: Okay.

20 MS. BETTS: And I can share it with,
21 at least with the working group, and then they
22 can determine how to go forward from there.

1 MR. KALEIKAU: Yes, I'll check with
2 our folks first and then --

3 MS. BETTS: Right, exactly. Okay,
4 thank you.

5 MR. KALEIKAU: -- we'll do that.

6 MR. YANDA: Doctor, this group has
7 spent time the last couple of years, a lot of
8 time discussing the citrus problem in Florida.
9 Wonder if you could give us a very brief overview
10 of where you see that today. Do you see any
11 other threats on the horizon anywhere near the
12 scope of that?

13 MR. KALEIKAU: That is definitely on
14 the radar screen. There's been a lot of
15 investment in that area. Tom Bewick has been
16 leading that for us. And actually, he would be
17 the best person to address where that's at right
18 now.

19 MS. KNORR: Other questions or
20 comments? Okay, thank you very much.

21 MR. KALEIKAU: All right, thank you.

22 MS. KNORR: Okay, next we're going to

1 be joined by Arthur Neal and his team at AMS.
2 And they're going to take a slightly different
3 format than normal, they're going to join us here
4 at the table and just share what's -- unless you
5 want to --

6 (Off microphone comments.)

7 MS. KNORR: Okay, fantastic.

8 MR. NEAL: Well, good afternoon,
9 everybody.

10 MS. KNORR: But we need a mic.

11 MR. NEAL: Oh, they can't hear?

12 MS. KNORR: Yes, we need the mic for
13 the -- does this mic work?

14 MR. NEAL: We'll sing a duet or a
15 quartet, whatever. Yes, yes. Can you hear us
16 okay on the mic?

17 (Off microphone comments.)

18 MR. NEAL: But I only sing for money
19 now. So we want to say thank you for the
20 invitation to be before you today. We are the
21 four musketeers. And but seriously though, we
22 come to you because we've heard that there was a

1 conversation you guys would like to have about
2 infrastructure and ways that USDA can support
3 infrastructure development.

4 So I'm Arthur, Arthur Neal, the Deputy
5 Administrator for the Transportation Marketing
6 Program which is in the Agriculture Marketing
7 Service. I've got Ken Keck here with me who's my
8 Director for Marketing Services in our program.
9 Closer to the mic. And we've got Andy
10 Jermolowicz here from Rural Development. And
11 we've got Ron Batcher here who's our architect in
12 our Marketing Services Division.

13 So we felt that it was best for us to
14 address you collectively than individual agencies
15 because that's how we're kind of working
16 nowadays. We're working more collectively and
17 collaboratively versus individually.

18 We recognize that there are a lot of
19 issues that arise across the country, and we can
20 better address those issues together than apart.
21 So what I guess we would like to go is first kind
22 of hear from you, for those who kind of wanted to

1 hear from us, what were some of the challenges
2 that you would like for us to address.

3 As we share with you what we have
4 available, we can kind of tailor our responses to
5 make sure that it meets your need. We want this
6 conversation to be active, not us talking to you.
7 We want to have an active dialogue.

8 We know that you've talked to our
9 grants division I think earlier, and they shared
10 with you about our specialty crop block grant and
11 farmer's market and local food promotion program,
12 and those programs don't necessarily meet your
13 need.

14 But we've got some other services that
15 we provide that can be supportive, and Rural
16 Development does as well, that's why Andy's here.
17 So without further ado, we would just like to
18 hear from you some of the thoughts that you have
19 about infrastructure challenges.

20 MR. JANIS: Well, I think I'll lead
21 off. I'm Michael Janis, I'm with the San
22 Francisco Wholesale Produce Market. And Arthur

1 and your team, we really appreciate you being
2 here. Let me just see if I can move this a
3 little bit.

4 And in the working group, while the
5 discussion focused mostly on wholesale market
6 infrastructure, I think it expanded really into
7 infrastructure within the fruits and vegetable
8 industry from farming level through distribution,
9 all the way through the markets, be it wholesale
10 markets, be it retail markets, be it food hubs.

11 And I will speak from, again a way of
12 teeing it up, from a wholesale market standpoint.
13 As many of you know, many of the wholesale
14 markets were of this era were built in the late
15 '50s, early '60s where a lot of land uses
16 changed, where markets moved from urban areas to
17 outside those deep urban areas.

18 And many of the markets in the country
19 like ours in San Francisco are very, still very,
20 very viable. Businesses are continuing to grow.
21 Probably our biggest challenge is we don't have
22 enough space, yet we have aging infrastructure.

1 And that infrastructure is aging, and
2 there's demand for the space. So many of us in
3 the country are very engaged in rebuilding our
4 markets or expanding our markets, and we seem to
5 be all sort of reinventing the wheel.

6 We're all doing this independently,
7 many of these projects are significant dollars.
8 Ours for example is about \$150 million project.
9 As we all know, Hunts Point is that times how
10 many points over.

11 And so we find ourselves all sort of
12 independently within either our cities or our
13 regions working very, very independently, sort of
14 learning to be developers, learning about food
15 infrastructure. And the question we keep raising
16 is is there a way that perhaps through USDA there
17 are some resources that can help us through these
18 journeys together through best practices,
19 learning, thinking about the markets more as a
20 national food resource.

21 So with that then, I think on the
22 committee level, spreading the conversation

1 beyond the wholesale markets to that broader
2 fruit and vegetable distribution chain.

3 MR. NEAL: Thank you for that. Andy,
4 you want to start off?

5 MR. JERMOLOWICZ: I'll let you.

6 MR. NEAL: Okay.

7 MR. JERMOLOWICZ: Okay, no. I'm from
8 rural development, and we work very closely with
9 Arthur and his team, and Tricia over there for
10 trying to collaborate more. We're basically a
11 program delivery agency. We are 47 state
12 offices, 400 area offices.

13 So one of our strengths in terms of
14 delivery is the connection of people. We have
15 staff in national office who look at more policy
16 type issues, and maybe some national programs.
17 But our strength is in your communities.

18 So we have that our limitation was
19 going to be here as on some of the terminal
20 markets, some of the urban markets, that we're
21 being by law, by statute we don't work in. We
22 work in rural communities.

1 So I think by definition our largest
2 community is cities and towns of 50,000 or less
3 which, you know, may seem small but we've had, I
4 think we've always done a lot of fruit and
5 vegetable work, but we probably didn't really
6 start tracking it until the 2008 Farm Bill where
7 it became, the USDA got a challenge to support
8 local and regional food systems.

9 And so we actually had that as a set
10 aside in some of our programs. So that's when we
11 started taking, doing some accounting. And I
12 think, Tricia, correct me if I'm wrong.

13 I think RD's number for this past
14 fiscal year was over 350 projects, but the more
15 important piece of well over \$150 million of
16 investment into, may not be all exclusively fruit
17 and vegetable infrastructure or businesses, but a
18 sizable chunk of our program dollars have been
19 going into communities to support the fruit and
20 vegetable food infrastructure, value chain
21 development.

22 We've worked closely with Arthur's

1 group on developing our background information on
2 food hubs. We put out that series where we're
3 trying to do more of an education piece, a
4 resource piece for people across the country.

5 One of our more innovative things was
6 last year we again collaborated with the value
7 chain coordinators. So we've got a few dollars
8 that we identified some regions across the
9 country where we have an individual on the ground
10 kind of working with that local regional team to,
11 you know, it's all food system based.

12 Okay, and again, different areas are
13 going to have different needs. Some of them have
14 more, are far ahead of the curve, some are
15 developing. So really what I'm here is to tell
16 you we have a portfolio I think the rural
17 development overall portfolio is \$220 billion, we
18 would be the equivalent of a mid-sized bank.

19 We have an array of probably between
20 30 and 40 different programs basically probably
21 starting from our community facilities program
22 which can support, that would be with the

1 municipality or a local government to support
2 essential community infrastructure which again
3 is, use your imagination.

4 But where it's relevant here is we've
5 done things with a lot of farmers markets, so we
6 can actually do some of the infrastructure. We
7 can actually do the bricks-and-mortar for and
8 provide the financing for a farmers market.

9 The programs that are probably more
10 relevant are on our business program side. We
11 start with our business and industry guaranteed
12 loan which is essentially we work with a bank and
13 a project, but USDA can come in there and
14 guarantee that loan and that can be, you know,
15 pretty much for any for profit type business.

16 And we've done there, again we've done
17 food hubs, we've done aggregation centers, we've
18 done processing centers, we've done grocery
19 stores. So again, we have a wide range of
20 projects that we can support.

21 We have a program that we very near
22 and dear to our hearts. It's called Value Added

1 Producer Grant. It actually works with the
2 agricultural producers or co-ops or producer
3 groups that assist people from taking, just from
4 being just supplying, like, being a commodity
5 supplier to taking whether it is turning tomatoes
6 into ketchup, apples into juice, whatever it is,
7 we can provide the planning and working capital
8 to take that in.

9 There is a portion of that program,
10 it's referred to as mid-tier value chains where
11 we try to support the value chain that we're
12 looking to support that center with or taking on
13 a group of wheat producers who are aggregating
14 and maybe doing some processing, you know,
15 milling the flour, maybe making pizza dough or
16 something and then selling into a much more
17 lucrative retail market.

18 So there's a lot of little pieces
19 there that we do. We've got, we don't have one
20 program that will probably address many of your
21 needs. We've got a lot of programs. And the
22 challenge, that's what I'm here for too, is to

1 help you maybe navigate our array, our portfolio
2 of programs to see where you can plug in for some
3 financing.

4 MR. NEAL: Thanks, Andy. So one of
5 the, for a wholesale market -- oh, Tricia?

6 MS. KOVACS: I just wanted to
7 highlight one thing, Andy, about the B&I loan
8 guarantees. You talked about the programs in
9 rural development are almost all for rural
10 communities.

11 But there is sort of an exception in
12 the B&I loan guarantee where some of the money,
13 you can get some of those loan guarantees if
14 you're working in underserved communities and if
15 you have a farm benefit or community economic
16 development benefit. So there are some that can
17 do urban projects if they meet those criteria.

18 MR. JERMOLOWICZ: Yes, and I was just
19 trying not to hog all of Arthur's time. I can
20 just go on forever. But there is a, that came in
21 in the 2008 Farm Bill, but there's an exception.
22 Well, I shouldn't say exception. There's an

1 opportunity to use the business and industry
2 guarantee loan program in an urban area if it is
3 supporting a local and regional food system.

4 It's usually addressing a food
5 insecurity issue. It gets a little complicated,
6 this is something we can, we would be happy to
7 follow up on. We can do a webinar, we can do
8 whatever you want to, if there's interest in that
9 to bring them on.

10 I should also mention, since you
11 brought it up, Tricia, the Value Added Producer
12 Grant program is not subject to the rule of
13 definition and is subject to the are you a
14 producer.

15 So if you are doing hydroponic in the
16 City of Chicago, or you're doing something there
17 where you are meeting USDA's definition of
18 producer, you are eligible for that program. And
19 since they gave me a little bit of extra time
20 here, we are also in rule business.

21 We deliver USDA's renewal energy
22 programs. And so that can run the gamut where on

1 the one end we're doing advanced bio fuel,
2 renewal chemical things. These are major, non-
3 corn based ethanol type next generation non-
4 petroleum based fuels, that's one aspect of it.

5 But we also have a Renewable Energy
6 for America program we refer to as REAP, or
7 Section 9007. This is for energy efficiency,
8 energy improvements. It can be used to do some
9 energy generations so we've used it to put on
10 solar arrays in places, sometimes anaerobic
11 digester.

12 But the big use of it is, again, it's
13 for ag producers and rural, small businesses.
14 But the examples for the fruit and vegetable or
15 the food system industry are endless. We've seen
16 solar panels put on greenhouses, they can use it
17 to, if you've got a facility, you need to upgrade
18 your heating HVAC system, you're looking to do on
19 a greenhouse, you're looking to upgrade the fans,
20 more efficient fans.

21 Again, eligible purpose. I had a good
22 one, I dropped it. But just there's just a

1 number of -- oh, you're doing, you have it there,
2 instead of fluorescent or incandescent lighting,
3 you know, replace all your stuff with LED
4 lighting.

5 From a production side, if they're
6 looking to more efficient irrigation equipment,
7 all these things are eligible. And again, it's
8 for ag producers and real small businesses. But
9 again, the ag producer, if you're in an urban
10 area, you can meet that definition and you would
11 be eligible for REAP.

12 MR. NEAL: Thanks, Tricia. I was
13 about to bring him back up to clarify that too.
14 So on our side of the house, ag marketing, as we
15 stated earlier, we've already talked to some of
16 our grants folks and we don't have a lot.

17 None of our grants can be used at AMS
18 for building. For our farmers market and local
19 food promotion program, we can support the
20 purchasing of equipment, but a lot of those
21 projects are focused on moving locally sourced
22 product into local markets.

1 However we've got in our marketing
2 services division a plethora of activities and
3 support programs that we offer, and I'm going to
4 bring Ken up to share those with you.

5 MR. KECK: So our friend in San
6 Francisco, you mentioned capacities and perhaps
7 redundancies that might be out there. So I just
8 wanted to mention a project that we worked on in
9 the last couple of years looking at some of these
10 potential redundancies as the -- has anyone
11 worked closely with the Philadelphia Wholesale
12 Produce Market?

13 Okay, so essentially with kind of the
14 food hub craze and the food hub building craze
15 kind of going on in the last ten years or so, we
16 wanted to take a look at whether existing
17 wholesale and terminal markets were handling
18 locally identified product already, and could
19 capacity within existing markets serve the
20 purpose of the aggregation purpose and the
21 wholesale purpose that food hubs might otherwise
22 serve.

1 So in conjunction with market news, we
2 got up to the Philadelphia Wholesale Market and a
3 partner there on site to try to identify today
4 what essentially is moving through that market,
5 whether they are necessarily valuing the local
6 designation or not.

7 Any guesses on a percentage of a total
8 year's volume that moves through that market?
9 Just defined as essentially the five surrounding
10 states. So I'll go ahead and -- what was that?

11 (Off microphone comments.)

12 MR. KECK: So it was at 11 percent.
13 The management of that market of several years
14 ago wanted to present itself as the source for
15 local, for restaurants, for grocery, et cetera.

16 But our study found that there was an
17 extreme disconnect between the producers that
18 were supplying the market thinking they weren't
19 going to get premium pricing, or their local
20 designation wasn't going to be valued, and then
21 over on the market side, the wholesale folks
22 thinking that the farmers weren't going to supply

1 their best stuff to the market.

2 So we presented this study to the
3 Philadelphia Wholesale Market Management, and
4 we're ready, willing, and able to take a look at
5 these kinds of questions in the infrastructure
6 and capacity world.

7 Now as Arthur said, we don't have a
8 lot of money to throw at if you've got crumbling
9 sidewalks and buildings and roofs and so forth,
10 but we can certainly help study some of these
11 capacity issues.

12 Speaking of buildings and sidewalks
13 and so forth, so Ron Batcher I know, our San
14 Francisco got to know maybe a little bit out at
15 the NAPM meeting.

16 So we hope to re-engage our
17 architectural services with the terminal and
18 wholesale market community because he's been, or
19 this function has been concentrating on more the
20 local and regional, but certainly ready, willing,
21 and able to get back into as was historically the
22 case into the terminal and wholesale markets.

1 But Ron, I don't know if you have any
2 thoughts from that meeting. Was it a wild bunch
3 out there?

4 MR. BATCHER: It was good.

5 MR. KECK: Okay, what happens in San
6 Francisco stays in San Francisco. But thank you
7 very much for the opportunity.

8 MR. NEAL: So one of the things that
9 we also do, we try to look at innovations that
10 are current. In the past, I guess our program
11 used to be called Wholesale and Alternative
12 Market Development.

13 And so there was a rich relationship
14 between AMS and the wholesale marketing community
15 for a number of years where we used to go in and
16 do feasibility assessments, do site assessments
17 and things of that nature.

18 All of that is still possible. So we
19 may not be able to play the full financing role
20 in helping markets expand, but we can certainly
21 play a role to help alleviate some of the costs.

22 The other part of it is that we love

1 to engage in problem solving. We love coming
2 together with our stakeholders to think through
3 how can we help you solve this problem. So the
4 reality is that there are other types of groups
5 financing projects across the country, not all
6 federal. Some of them philanthropic.

7 However, there are always caveats to
8 things, there are goals that they're trying to
9 fulfill. How does your operation meet those
10 goals. How do you fit. It may not be the whole
11 operation, it may be a component of your
12 operation.

13 Thinking through strategies to access
14 different pots of money, you know, we love to do
15 that. That's why RD is here as well, because
16 they have different components. So local is a
17 part of the Farm Bill, Farm Bill, the 2014 Farm
18 Bill. That's what some of our programs fund.

19 The reality, the issue that we're
20 looking at with Philadelphia Wholesale Market, we
21 were trying to figure out how do you take
22 advantage of the local label because we know that

1 you're moving some product.

2 I know San Francisco is moving
3 product. I'm not sure who else here is moving
4 local product. But there are programs to support
5 your efforts to move that locally sourced product
6 into local markets that can help you gain access
7 to some infrastructure compliments such as
8 refrigeration, such as lighting and things like
9 that such as IT systems that help you track your
10 product and develop your business procedures more
11 effectively.

12 We would love to sit down and talk
13 about how we can help you think through those
14 challenges. There's another thing that we love
15 to do because we don't fully understand all of
16 the challenges that you have, we would love to
17 talk to you on a more regular basis.

18 When you have these types of issues
19 that pop up, just sharing them so that we can be
20 aware of them and engage other people across USDA
21 and other federal agencies. One of the things
22 we're going to be doing pretty soon is engaging

1 the Small Business Administration so that we can
2 promote their programs to our stakeholders
3 because people may not be aware of them.

4 So if we become more learned in what
5 they have to offer, we can share them with you as
6 well. So when we talk to them, we'll be thinking
7 about that wholesale market need to expand their
8 infrastructure because their resources can be
9 brought to bear to support that effort.

10 MS. KNORR: Okay, does anybody have
11 any further questions or comments?

12 MS. HERRON: This is Johanna. I know
13 that Farm to School a year ago I want to say
14 created this great funding resource that kind of
15 walked you through if you were a state agency.
16 Do you have it with you?

17 Anyway, I'm just wondering because I
18 know that not all of the grant programs you
19 referenced were in that resource. But is there
20 any sort of one stop shop where you could be like
21 I'm a farmer, these are the ones that apply to
22 me, that kind of thing?

1 MS. KOVACS: So in your packet you
2 have this one which is a cross agency, all the
3 programs they talked about and more from those
4 two agencies are also listed on here.

5 This one is USDA programs in the local
6 food supply chain, specifically. And it's
7 organized by where in that supply chain you are.
8 So from land conservation to production to
9 processing, aggregation, distribution, and
10 markets. And then there's a section for research
11 education and technical assistance for producers
12 down at the bottom.

13 It's color coded by which agency those
14 different programs live in. And we will email it
15 out afterwards. Yes, we can email it out
16 afterwards and it's clickable, so you can get
17 directly to the program pages to learn more about
18 those.

19 The one you referenced about FNS is
20 organized by who you are and whether you can get
21 those grants for Farm to School. We can send
22 that one out too. It's a little, it's helpful to

1 look at if you're a non-profit, you qualify for
2 these, you're eligible to apply.

3 And we have talked about in my little
4 working group with local and regional food
5 systems, doing a hybrid which is essentially all
6 the USDA local food programs organized not by
7 where in the supply chain but by what kind of
8 entity you are. So stay tuned, we will be
9 working on something like that.

10 (Off microphone comments.)

11 MS. KOVACS: Yes, so also this website
12 at the bottom here is AMS.USDA.gov/localfood. On
13 that site we also have the local food compass map
14 which is basically a map of the United States
15 where we have put several different things.

16 One is food systems assets. So their
17 meet processors, farm to school sites, farmers
18 markets and food hubs, things that come out of
19 the voluntary local food directories that the AMS
20 team there works on.

21 So that's there, and you can kind of
22 see what's happening in your area. And also it

1 lists projects and programs that are funded
2 through USDA programs, many of which are here,
3 the grant program specifically, and some that are
4 even with other agencies that are relevant to
5 local and regional food systems.

6 So you can do that by state, you can
7 also look at tribal zones, you can look at
8 congressional districts, you can sort of mix and
9 match it in different ways.

10 I use it frequently if someone calls
11 me looking for local resources to see what's
12 happening, who's active there, what funding they
13 have, and what kinds of projects they're working
14 on. So that is also, you find that through the
15 same website. Thanks.

16 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Thanks again very
17 much for this presentation and for this great
18 handout. And I did note several of the programs
19 that you mentioned that are listed on here,
20 particularly, you know, business industry,
21 guaranteed loans, community facilities grants,
22 cooperative development grants, business

1 development grants, value added producer grants,
2 which it's my understanding from taking a look at
3 other people's analyses are things that are
4 getting zeroed out in the proposed budget, the
5 President's skinny budget.

6 And so I was hoping that you could,
7 you know, obviously the actual budget is going to
8 be coming out soon. But that seems to be sort of
9 potentially ripping some pretty big holes in this
10 support effort.

11 MR. NEAL: That is proposed in the
12 President's budget. Budget hearings will start,
13 we'll all find out what's going to happen in due
14 season. Until then, we're going to continue to
15 operate as we have been.

16 You know, we've got missions to meet,
17 programs to deliver. And that's what we're
18 primarily focused on. So until we hear clearly
19 what's going to happen, we're operating from the
20 standpoint that these programs are still in play.

21 MR. JERMOLOWICZ: And I, you know,
22 again speaking from a profit agency that I'm not

1 sure I'll have a job next year, right now we were
2 very happy with what Congress returned for us for
3 the 2017 full year CR, all the programs that you
4 referenced, all the programs that have been
5 proposed at zero were fully funded.

6 We took no CHIMP or rescission on any of
7 it. So you know, whether I've got a -- you smack
8 me if I'm standing out of the parameters of what
9 I can say. But no, we were pleased with what,
10 and we kind of took it as maybe a little signal
11 from the Hill that, you know, we got your back.

12 MS. KNORR: Anyone else with questions
13 or comments? Thank you very much, gentlemen.

14 MS. KOVACS: I just wanted, while we
15 have a second here in between things, I chatted
16 with Ed briefly. Another resource on plant
17 breeding research that I just wanted to mention
18 is the Foundation for Food and Agriculture
19 Research which was also in the Farm Bill.

20 It partners with USDA and with
21 industry on research that is relevant to industry
22 needs. Those projects are funded half by an

1 industry partner, or a partner of any kind, and
2 half by FFAR. So that's worth looking at. I
3 don't know a lot, but I do know that they do some
4 research in produce.

5 MS. KNORR: Thank you. So Roland, I
6 don't know if you all have any draft
7 recommendations at this point to share or what
8 the status is.

9 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Yes, we had not
10 formed particular recommendations, you know,
11 really been more in a fact finding mode. I mean,
12 I do think this issue of the upcoming budget and
13 the importance of the Secretary, you know, the
14 importance of explaining to the Secretary the
15 importance of these programs to our industry
16 might be something that we want to consider given
17 that, I mean, it was certainly good news that the
18 Congressional budget maintained a level and even
19 increased funding for some of these programs in
20 the current year budget.

21 But you know, the, again that's, this
22 is halfway through it. I mean, they've already

1 spent the money anyway, right, to some extent.
2 So for next year, it does seem like this could be
3 a significant issue and concern.

4 So I would, you know, suggest that if
5 it would be the group's pleasure, perhaps our
6 working group could work on something brief that
7 we could bring for consideration tomorrow if that
8 might be something that we would want to --
9 because obviously the time is now to get a
10 recommendation out on negotiations for next
11 year's budget, and particularly since we don't
12 know if we're going to meet again. So that would
13 be one reason perhaps for us to have a
14 recommendation in this area.

15 MS. HERRON: One thing often that gets
16 considered is your level of success at dispensing
17 your funds. I'm not familiar with -- yes, could
18 you speak to that?

19 (Off microphone comments.)

20 MS. HERRON: Yes, because I know, yes,
21 do you get rid of all of the funds you have
22 available, or is there some leftover?

1 MR. JERMOLOWICZ: We, on an annual
2 basis, get rid of everything. The majority of
3 the programs that I spoke about we refer to as
4 being oversubscribed where that, you know, demand
5 greatly exceeds the supply of dollars. So we are
6 getting every dollar out the door.

7 MR. NEAL: And that's the same for
8 marketing services programs. For the farmers
9 market and local food promotion program we had
10 \$26 million last year. We had a request for \$200
11 million. So we got all of it out the door.

12 MR. JERMOLOWICZ: Yes, and to give you
13 an example, because I always mention with our
14 business and industry guaranteed loan program,
15 our funding authority on that is probably up to a
16 billion dollars. Just a couple clicks below that
17 we will obligate that full amount this year.

18 We're already well on our way. And if
19 it's a grant program, you know, yes, those
20 dollars are gone.

21 MS. HERRON: Thank you.

22 (Off microphone comments.)

1 MR. VAZQUEZ: A couple of questions.
2 When you guys have multiple obligations, you said
3 that the demand exceeds the supply. So how do
4 you guys determine which project is going to get
5 funded, you know, versus the other? And also,
6 how difficult is the application process? I
7 mean, to apply for this grant?

8 MR. JERMOLOWICZ: For grants I'm sure
9 it's the same with Arthur. I mean, we'll put out
10 a public notice. And in outlining there's a
11 regulation for the program. The notice, the
12 public notice will tell you what needs to go into
13 that application.

14 It will actually outline for you what
15 the scoring will be, it will give you, you know,
16 that's one thing I think we do fairly well. It's
17 pretty clear that, you know, 20 points for this,
18 10 points for this. It will give you what it is.

19 So on a lot of them that for RD we
20 have some programs that are national, so all
21 those applications come in. They're basically
22 scored, ranked, and you just start chopping down

1 that list until you run out of money.

2 Some of our programs in rural
3 development, I mentioned our 47 state offices.
4 Some of those are allocated where we will take,
5 you know, Congress will give us a pot of money
6 that we in turn then take portions of that and
7 divide it up between all the state offices.

8 So then there is a competition
9 essentially at the state office. So they, you
10 know, again, that's one of the things with rural
11 development, if you're in a particular state, is
12 get to know that state office, get to know that
13 state director.

14 Let him or her know that you've got a
15 project or whatever. It can help because in some
16 cases the, you know, the administrator or state
17 director could have some, can add some additional
18 points.

19 In terms of complexity, you know, I
20 stand before you and tell you yes, in certain
21 cases they can be tough. We've tried to work
22 with Arthur on some of the cases there. It's not

1 just USDA or rural development. You know, we're
2 prescribed certain things that you've got to
3 register with the systems award management, you
4 have to have a DUNS number, you've got to go
5 through a lot of hoops to go through.

6 We try to provide information. We
7 have some programs that people would say are
8 relatively easy. One that I am particular very
9 sensitive to is our Value Added Producer Grant is
10 frequently, it's overly complicated.

11 We've worked to try to provide anybody
12 who's interested a template, a kind of just like
13 a hand-hold, walk you through, we view it as a
14 living document. We update that thing every year
15 trying to take in account where you, someone like
16 you tells me it's like, you know, Andy, this is a
17 pain in the butt. This is impossible to figure
18 out.

19 So we continue to try. I mean, we
20 need to hear that feedback from you. I don't
21 mind. I get beat up on a daily basis about how
22 complicated the programs are and all the hoops

1 you have to jump through.

2 But your voice there is going to get
3 my undersecretary or the secretary's office to
4 put a thumb on me and say make that program more
5 accessible.

6 MR. NEAL: And so from my perspective
7 at AMS, we try to make the process as easy to
8 understand as possible. The documents are fairly
9 lengthy. And that's because we have to follow
10 federal regulations, the Office of Management and
11 Budget.

12 And the systems that Andy mentioned
13 earlier that you have to register, we find that a
14 lot of applicants will say our processes are too
15 involved because they wait until the day before
16 the application is due to apply.

17 That's -- last year we had a very high
18 rejection rate because they did not get through
19 the system, because they tried to apply for those
20 required credentials the day before the
21 application closed.

22 So then it became a very complicated

1 process for them. Because they didn't get in.

2 But if you start early enough, we
3 gave, I think, we gave 75 days or something for
4 people to apply this year. If you start early
5 enough, I think it's fairly simple.

6 The primary thing is making sure that
7 folks connect the project with the mission of the
8 program. And clearly, because our programs,
9 we're trying to have an impact on farmers and
10 ranchers through marketing.

11 So how does the project enhance the
12 local marketing opportunities for farmers and
13 ranchers. So establishing that clear line back
14 to the farmers and ranchers and establishing the
15 need.

16 Making sure the reviewers -- because
17 we work with over a hundred reviewers across the
18 country, excuse me, to review these, as external
19 reviewers, to make sure that they can see that
20 there's an established need for this project.
21 And help them believe that this is important for
22 the farmers and ranchers. That's what's key.

1 It can't be about the individual
2 business. It's got to be making sure that we're
3 creating economic opportunities for farmers and
4 ranchers through marketing projects. And
5 sometimes through educational and technical
6 assistance projects.

7 MR. JERMOLOWICZ: And I just have to
8 echo that. You know, when the notice comes out,
9 it pretty much gives you the guide of how to
10 develop that application.

11 You know, it's don't read too much
12 into it. I mean, we've -- we're the government.
13 And we've got to go through multiple lawyers and
14 everything.

15 It has to be clear. If it says do
16 this, do that. Don't try to interpret things.
17 People, I think I've found where people have took
18 the more keep it simple, have had the strongest
19 applications.

20 We get some in there, they're sending
21 us, you know, a hundred and some pages, maps
22 this. And it's like, you know, it's irrelevant.

1 You know, you spent a lot of time, you
2 know, just as Arthur mentioned, if it asks you
3 how many producers are you going to help, or can
4 you demonstrate the value here, just put that
5 down and, you know, just -- my recommendation to
6 a lot of people is always just -- just try to
7 keep it simple.

8 And for rule development programs,
9 really we do encourage people to make contact
10 with that State office. There is program
11 specialists there that they can walk you through
12 some of these things.

13 A lot of times if they're, you know,
14 not overly stretched, you can shoot by, draft
15 applications. You know, and ask them, it's like,
16 you know, hey do I have all my ducks in a row?
17 They can give you, you know, it's like hey, no.
18 I would do something there.

19 So we can do some feedback. We're
20 always available again, if resource is existing.
21 If there are some groups, you know, we will do
22 some training on particular programs on how to

1 apply.

2 MR. BATCHER: So, aside from the
3 grants programs, I just wanted to mention that
4 the Architectural Technical Assistance Program is
5 not in relation to our grant's program. So that
6 technical assistance, you can contact our
7 division and we can supply that without any grant
8 application.

9 So you can just contact us directly.
10 We will assist with local markets, food hubs,
11 farmers' markets, and of course historically we
12 dealt a lot with wholesale markets. And we'd
13 like to reestablish that connection.

14 MR. HANAS: Rick Hanas with Duda. Let
15 me ask a question. You all have enlightened me
16 quite a bit here. And I appreciate it.

17 Is -- when you talk about filing these
18 applications, is there a deadline specific for
19 each one of these applications? And is that
20 printed somewhere?

21 Is that on the USDA site? Or where is
22 that located?

1 MR. JERMOLOWICZ: It's probably the --
2 we are driven or to utilize -- you're going to
3 hate -- I hate -- I can't even believe I'm going
4 to encourage you to do this.

5 (Laughter.)

6 MR. JERMOLOWICZ: But go to
7 grants.gov. It is the system that all federal
8 funding that needs to be announced. And the
9 portal for electronic applications, you can sign
10 up there for -- on specific programs.

11 It will give you all that information
12 on when the program -- or you can get a notice
13 when the program opens. Get those due dates.

14 Do we have -- it's actually not a bad
15 thought. We don't have that in rule development.

16 We'll probably have a web page for
17 each one of those programs that will either
18 probably tell you if the program is currently
19 open. Here's the amount of money that's
20 available. Here is the application due dates.
21 Here is our kind of expected time when we'll make
22 awards.

1 So that information is out there. I
2 won't say that it's always the easiest to find.
3 But, that's something we can work with this
4 group. We can, you know, share resources with
5 you.

6 But, on the question, a lot of those
7 programs, well yes, there will be multiple --
8 they don't all come due at the same time. Or we
9 actually tried to spread those out so we can kind
10 of try to have a work flow.

11 If we had the due date all the same
12 for each program, we would just get overwhelmed
13 with having to try to process everything at one
14 time. So we try to parse them out throughout the
15 year.

16 MR. HANAS: Thank you.

17 MS. KOVACS: Yes. That's a really
18 good question. And as someone who works across
19 agencies, I get that question periodically.

20 You do have to basically go to each
21 project site. Because even the same grant
22 program doesn't come out at the same time every

1 year necessarily.

2 There tend to be seasons. But for
3 various reasons, a lot of factors go into when --
4 what the timing is for each one.

5 I have been asked if I could make a
6 schedule for when they all come out. But it
7 would be a whole job to kind of keep track of
8 them all in one calendar and make sure that it's
9 right.

10 Because what we don't want to do is
11 put together an annual calendar and have it
12 mislead people and have them miss deadlines. So
13 the closest we could come so far is this document
14 where you can click on the one you're interested
15 in and learn.

16 And people do make their own calendars
17 for the ones they know they're interested in.
18 But keeping one across all agencies at USDA has
19 so far proven too time consuming for what we have
20 to offer for that.

21 MR. JERMOLOWICZ: Regrettably, I think
22 there's people who have a profession that that's

1 their job. Is to follow the Federal Register
2 and, you know, track when these announcements
3 come out. And you know, with due dates and all
4 that kind of stuff.

5 So, as a taxpayer as well, I apologize
6 to you.

7 MR. SUTTON: Dan Sutton. I just want
8 to circle back around to affirm kind of Roland's
9 thought.

10 But, I think it would be good if we
11 could develop some type of statement to encourage
12 these programs stay funded moving forward.
13 However, we can do that in our capacity.

14 But, I don't know, if we could work
15 some language up tonight, and maybe all review
16 that tomorrow. But I think it's important.

17 Without infrastructure we don't move
18 any of our products, so.

19 MR. VAZQUEZ: Could you guys repeat
20 the dollar value of the programs in general?

21 MR. JERMOLOWICZ: Okay. For us I'll
22 say our business and industry guarantee loan

1 program, typically, you know, we've done well.
2 We've made good investments.

3 So that program's typically annually
4 at about a billion dollars. Our Value Added
5 Producer Grant Program, we're probably in the 25
6 million dollar a year. That's a grant program,
7 25 million dollar a year appropriation.

8 Renewable energy is -- again, that's
9 both a grant and a loan program. So, they're in
10 the hundred plus million dollar area.

11 I can follow up with the lead here and
12 give you some of our program levels. You know,
13 at least what we have, you know, for this year.
14 And kind of it would give you a good example
15 historically of where we are.

16 MR. NEAL: And for the Specialty Crop
17 Block Grant Program, it's authorized that 72.5
18 million through '17. And then from 2018, it's
19 been authorized for 85 million in perpetuity.

20 Then for the Farmers Market and Local
21 Food Promotion Program, it's authorized at 30
22 million until 2018. So that's just an idea.

1 MS. KNORR: Anyone else with questions
2 or comments?

3 (No audible response.)

4 MS. KNORR: I'd like to make mention
5 of just a couple of things with regards to the
6 grant programs. It does seem to me, with regard
7 to the Federal Register and how they're announced
8 and that kind of thing, for many organizations
9 that I've worked with in the past, if you don't
10 have your partners and your project idea already
11 together to a certain extent when that
12 announcement comes out, you really can't apply.
13 The time frame just doesn't allow.

14 And I understand that you're on a time
15 frame. But, for anybody who's considering doing
16 those, you really have to have your act together
17 before the grants are even announced. So that
18 you have a good chance.

19 One of the other things that I hear
20 from smaller nonprofits across our State in Ohio
21 is that, you know, if you're -- you're a small
22 organization, the chance of you getting funding

1 versus the chance of our land grant university
2 getting funding is, you know, there's just -- you
3 don't have a fighting chance.

4 The universities have professional
5 grant writers who are spending all of their time
6 doing this. Is there anything that you all do to
7 help mitigate to make sure that some of those
8 funds are disbursed to the smaller organizations
9 who really are active in the communities and
10 doing really solid work but don't maybe have
11 quite the ability to have such a polished
12 application?

13 MR. McREYNOLDS: And don't charge 40
14 percent overhead.

15 MR. NEAL: Right. No, no. That's a
16 Catch 22. So, for pretty much the existence of
17 the Farmers Market Promotion Program and then
18 even when it came to the local food promotion
19 component in 2014, we were awarding approximately
20 320 projects a year to ensure that regional and
21 national diversity.

22 That's almost impossible to manage.

1 Not only that, not everybody can handle the
2 funds. Because they are small.

3 And so you spend, you know, with a
4 staff of four people you may spend the entire
5 time chasing down money. Because they could
6 never handle it in the first place.

7 So, we tried that model. And it
8 didn't work for us. So we had to change our
9 model to increase our award amounts.

10 So we went from one hundred thousand
11 dollars being the max for our Farmers Market and
12 Local Food to five hundred thousand being our
13 max. Because we need impacts. Because if we
14 can't have impacts, we don't keep a program.

15 So, I understand the need to get the
16 money out to, you know, the people out on the
17 ground. But if the people out on the ground don't
18 give us return on investment, we lose our
19 program.

20 And so we, I guess in 2014 we also did
21 national trainings to help folks on the ground
22 understand how to apply for the programs. We did

1 over 126 physical workshops in every State and
2 some of the territories across the country.

3 Just so they knew how to access our
4 programs. Because our objective is to make sure
5 it gets on the ground.

6 So what we did, we bifurcated our
7 program. We now have grant projects that are
8 called capacity built. To still fund the smaller
9 groups.

10 But those smaller groups have got to
11 have their partnerships in place. They've got to
12 show that the community is behind the project.
13 That the local government is behind the project.
14 Because we want success.

15 We just don't want to say hey, we've
16 got your hundred thousand dollars or 250 thousand
17 dollars here. That's not what we're looking for.
18 We're looking for a return on ROI.

19 And so we've -- we're in the process
20 of analyzing the impact of our Farmers Market and
21 Local Food Promotion Program for 2014. And thus
22 far, we're showing that for every dollar that

1 we're putting in, we're getting about a 60 cent
2 return for every dollar.

3 Which is pretty good. And for the
4 Local Food Promotion alone, just this far, we've
5 still got some more projects, we're looking at
6 2.40. So that's pretty significant.

7 And so that's what we're looking for
8 across the country from investments that are
9 being made.

10 MS. KNORR: Well, and I think those
11 trainings that you've offered are very high
12 quality and very helpful. And I do appreciate the
13 fact that working with some smaller
14 organizations, sometimes that return is not
15 there.

16 I think my final comment would be to
17 make sure to encourage the universities to
18 partner with some of those smaller scale
19 organizations. Because sometimes universities,
20 while we value the work that they do, sometimes
21 they're not necessarily engaged in the
22 communities that really have the best idea or the

1 best opportunities for those growers.

2 So, really encouraging them to forge
3 their owner partnerships with community
4 organizations, I think is a very important.
5 Especially in those two programs that you just
6 mentioned.

7 MR. NEAL: And just a comment, those
8 -- some universities get Farmers Market and Local
9 Food Promotion grants. The majority of them do
10 not.

11 The majority of our awards go to the
12 organizations on the ground, to nonprofits, to
13 businesses that are working with farmers and to
14 local governments.

15 MR. JERMOLOWICZ: And it would be very
16 similar for rural development. And again, you
17 know, we've got a -- just a slightly bigger
18 portfolio of programs.

19 And so again, it's becoming, you know,
20 where certain of our programs are probably
21 directed to some of the smaller organizations.
22 Whereas other ones maybe, you know, require that

1 a university or a larger, you know, applicant is
2 going to get there.

3 Again, it's looking at the notices
4 there. Sometimes it's either through Congress,
5 or it could be the Administration will emphasize
6 some type of priority in a particular program
7 that an applicant that meets certain criteria, or
8 a project that's serving a particular audience
9 will get a priority score for that applicant.

10 Look for those things. I can't speak
11 on AMS, but I can tell you in our D Programs,
12 that when there are program notices come out
13 where they are indicating that there is a
14 priority, you need to try to get that priority.

15 Because it has a, you know, a
16 significant impact on the score and your
17 probability of being funded.

18 MS. BALCH: I just wanted to add one
19 comment about the grants. I have found that it's
20 a lot easier to apply under the AMS Grant
21 Programs, the Farmers Market Promotion Program
22 and the Local Food Promotion Program, compared to

1 some of the NIFA grants like the Community Food
2 Projects, competitive grants is okay.

3 But the Food and Security Nutrition
4 Incentive one is really a pain. So, I just
5 wanted to say. There's a lot of difference
6 between the different programs.

7 MS. KOVACS: And I was going to say in
8 relation to that that I think several, but not
9 all, grant programs across USDA have gone towards
10 having a contract or some trainings around the
11 country. Webinars, I know the Farm to School
12 Grants that you heard about earlier, they do a
13 number of webinars before.

14 So, if you're watching for the RFAs to
15 come out, there usually some kind of an education
16 process that goes with that for each one of them.
17 And it's true, some of them are more complicated.

18 And as Andy said, sometimes that's
19 because that's the way the program is designed by
20 -- that's the guidelines and authorizations we're
21 given at the different agencies.

22 And sometimes it's just because

1 they're trying to do something very specific. Or
2 be able to capture the outcomes. And they can
3 make it pretty complicated. We know that.

4 MS. KNORR: Great. Thank you so much,
5 gentlemen. We appreciate it.

6 (Applause.)

7 MS. KNORR: So we are still running
8 ahead of schedule. Our next working group is the
9 Market News Working Group.

10 Tom, do you want to share a little bit
11 about what's been happening in that group? And
12 set the stage for our speaker here.

13 MR. WILLIAMS: This is Tom Williams
14 from Coborn's. We really as a group, there's
15 three of us on our committee. So, we're always
16 looking for additional committee members.

17 (Laughter.)

18 MR. WILLIAMS: And it's a very short
19 term committee. Because really what our intent
20 was, is to be able as a group, to put forth a
21 statement in asking for continued appropriation
22 for the market news.

1 Because my understanding from the last
2 presentation that we did have, is this is funded
3 through an appropriation. It is not funded
4 through user fees.

5 And so in order for this to continue,
6 which I believe -- and Terry will be able to
7 speak to this much better than I will be able to,
8 it will -- is the funding through October of this
9 year or next year?

10 (Off microphone comment.)

11 MR. WILLIAMS: September 30. So it's
12 September 30 of this year. So, a statement, a
13 timely statement I believe is worthwhile.

14 Because we had new members on here, I
15 wanted Terry to be able to have a presentation
16 for those that had missed it. Or to refresh the
17 memory for those that are here.

18 There was a webinar that they did
19 have, that the Market News Group did have, for
20 different stakeholders that I did participate on.
21 And it was very, very informative.

22 And I had asked that Terry come here

1 and do something similar to give us some more
2 information about Market News and the importance
3 of it to us, to our industry. And we are not
4 prepared at this moment to give a recommendation.
5 But my hopes are is by tomorrow that we would be
6 able to.

7 MR. LONG: All right. Thank you, Tom.
8 I told my colleague I was coming here and I'm the
9 last person on the agenda. And they said, oh
10 boy, I hope you've got some funny stories.

11 Four o'clock, there are no stories
12 that funny.

13 (Laughter.)

14 MR. LONG: But I do have one I will
15 tell you. My mother was 89 the other day. And I
16 went down this weekend to visit.

17 And she says, well, how are things at
18 work? And I said, well, you know, there was this
19 application process. And we wanted to apply, but
20 we didn't get it in on time. But it wasn't our
21 fault.

22 And my mother goes, of course it

1 wasn't your fault. Okay. Right? Okay. So, my
2 mother knows it's not my fault.

3 Anyway, again this is basically the
4 same presentation we did before. But I did want
5 to go through it quickly, because again, there
6 are new people.

7 And basically, the Market News is the
8 eyes and ears of American Agriculture. For this
9 particular group, the eyes and ears of the
10 produce industry.

11 Again, our mission is very simple,
12 apply timely, accurate and unbiased information.
13 And again, our motto, get it. Get it right, get
14 it out.

15 That information, not getting it to
16 people when they need it, in the form they need
17 it, is as hurtful as not having any information
18 at all or even worse.

19 The main levels of the markets we
20 cover, we're covering shipping point or FOB,
21 terminal or wholesale markets, retail. Again,
22 these are only weekly advertised specials we're

1 talking, but the retail section.

2 And farmers' markets and farmers'
3 auction on a limited basis. Other products you
4 may not be aware of, apple juice concentrate, in
5 fact the industry came to us and asked us to
6 create that report.

7 They wanted to build a futures market.
8 And they needed USDA data to match up against
9 that. So actually, that was a report we created
10 at the request of the industry.

11 Apples for processing, international
12 markets of interest, I think we're tracking about
13 16 or 18 international markets. And honey as a
14 product and bee keeping as an industry.

15 On the movement side, again, a big
16 part of what we do, one of the most tracked, I'd
17 say, shipments domestic. Again, truck and rail,
18 crossings in Mexico, boat, air, and truck of
19 course.

20 Imports, in our last count we had 63
21 countries. And we're tracking produce imports or
22 flowers into the U.S. Again, air, truck and boat.

1 Just an assortment of some of our
2 major national level reports most closely
3 watched, the weekly shipping point trends, we'll
4 look at that. The retail report, we'll talk
5 about that. Truck rate, the same thing.

6 The daily movement report. We're
7 aggregating all the movement we've captured for
8 the United States for the produce and cut flower
9 industry. Put it in a single report. So if all
10 you're tracking is movement, trucking company for
11 example, it's in one location.

12 The Mexican crossings report.
13 Obviously this time of year the Mexican crossings
14 are a big part of our fresh fruits and
15 vegetables.

16 Specialty crops, organic summary.
17 Again, a recent report we added. And again, the
18 summary includes all of the organic data we're
19 capturing, shipping point, any of the wholesale
20 markets, or all of the wholesale markets I should
21 say, as well as the retail. Again, all in one
22 location as well as organic movement where we

1 have it.

2 Talking about the national retail
3 report. This is a quick glance out of it. We're
4 tracking 410 major supermarket chains comprising
5 just over 30 thousand individual stores.

6 We're doing this on a weekly basis.
7 Practically every reporter in Market News is
8 helping to capture this data. And again, weekly
9 advertised specials. Very widely tracked. And
10 continues to grow.

11 People say, well you know, we'd like
12 some of these lively processed apples -- I mean,
13 products like sliced apples in the store,
14 chopped watermelon, et cetera, et cetera. So we
15 continue to try to grow this report in response
16 to customer demand.

17 Again, the truck rate report, most of
18 the major shippers in the country, if not all of
19 them, cooperate with this, as do the truck
20 brokers, trucking companies. Very closely
21 watched by the industry.

22 Again, a very high level of

1 cooperation nationwide. Again, we're trucking --
2 I'm sorry, tracking the trucks, the available
3 supplies by each of the major shipping districts.

4 And of course the districts change as
5 the seasons change. So we're following the truck
6 movement throughout the United States for
7 primarily the fresh fruit and vegetable industry.

8 The trends for those of you that
9 follow that, again, this is a weekly snapshot of
10 commodity groups and then specific deals. The
11 berries, blueberries, what are the districts
12 we're tracking? What are the markets for each of
13 those districts?

14 There's three data sets there, the
15 movement of blueberries from central and northern
16 Florida, three weeks ago movement, two weeks ago
17 movement, last week's movement. And here is what
18 we're seeing trading today, active, slow, et
19 cetera, et cetera.

20 So, it gives you a glance now, and
21 that three-week period. And again, for seasonal
22 deals that move around, very important and very

1 closely watched.

2 Again, this is the most recent count,
3 1,453 markets. Again, New York City might be
4 five markets, fruits, vegetables, potatoes, and
5 onions, blah, blah, blah.

6 And all the shipping point deals.
7 Four thousand individuals separate contacts in
8 the industry. And again, total count, 411
9 commodities. And again, apples is a commodity.
10 Apples for processing is a commodity.

11 That list there says we're currently
12 covering 133. I forgot to update. We're at 141
13 and growing.

14 EViews. EViews is an aggregation of
15 hits, downloads, accesses, not just views, and
16 not just hits. I'll get it right in a minute,
17 but page views.

18 Real things they've gone into our
19 sites and looked at data or pulled data out.
20 Fifty-four million times last year they went to
21 the Market News site to pull data. Fifty-four
22 incidences of actually pulling or looking at

1 data.

2 What's next? That was our topic here.
3 MARS is our new data-based system. The system we
4 have is Oracle. It was built in 1992. We're
5 limping along.

6 We've been several years at this
7 effort. It should be, at least the first phases
8 of it, available in January of '18.

9 Now the big deal about MARS is, big
10 data, open data. Now, for those of you who used
11 our data routinely and go to the portal, you're
12 limited to doing a couple of years at a time.
13 Again, you know, it's a 20-year old system.

14 With MARS you'll be able to pull,
15 okay, I want everything you have on apples.
16 International, domestic, shipments, process. You
17 could pull every bit of that with that one key
18 phrase. You know, so you'll be able to pull vast
19 quantities of data.

20 It also allows us to capture data.
21 And I'll talk a little bit more about that. But
22 again, the tool was built to both make big data

1 available, open data. And, to allow data from
2 other locations to come in and be available to
3 our customers.

4 Organic data initiative. And again,
5 we've talked about this. We're about, I guess, a
6 year and a half in. I'm sorry, a half a year
7 into the two-year project.

8 The plan was, in the original write up
9 for that money in the farm bill, we'd add ten
10 market reporters and grow our coverage. With the
11 hiring challenges and freezes, et cetera, we have
12 not yet hired any of those people.

13 We still have a plan. We still hope
14 to do that. We have the farm bill money. But,
15 you know, we need hiring authority and get those
16 people onboard.

17 There's clearly data out there.
18 There's markets we aren't covering. Again,
19 resources are the key.

20 Now this is what I want to talk a
21 little bit about, the Market Information
22 Organization of the Americas. Again, these are

1 Market News partners in the other 32 countries
2 within the hemisphere.

3 I was just down at the executive
4 committee meeting in Ecuador. And we have made
5 great strides in building, or working towards
6 standards for how we manage our data.

7 Now what this leads to is, as we build
8 MARS, we'll be able to start accepting this data
9 freed from our key trading partners. So you as a
10 customer from Market News, going to the portal,
11 will also be able to access these other key
12 trading partners around the hemisphere.

13 Again, we're doing bilateral capacity
14 building and training in those countries. We're
15 working regionally to develop like in the case of
16 the Caribbean, a cloud-based system.

17 We'll get them all normalized. We'll
18 have access to that data. And when we have
19 access, of course, we make the public have -- or
20 allow the public to have access.

21 And again, here we believe that market
22 transparency benefits all market participants.

1 Level the playing field.

2 Again, this is the message we've been
3 selling throughout the hemisphere. Again, the
4 better we do at covering our markets, the better
5 the industry can use the data and make the right
6 decisions.

7 Again, this is my thing. And I
8 wondered if they had told you that our new
9 Secretary, Secretary Perdue, has recommended a
10 new model for USDA. I don't know if you all had
11 heard that.

12 It's do right and feed everyone. So,
13 that's the Secretary's new motto for USDA.

14 So, with that, I would thank you for
15 your attention. And ask if you have any
16 questions.

17 MS. KNORR: Questions or comments for
18 Mr. Long?

19 MR. NICHOLSON: Well, I guess on the
20 funding. Just could you talk a little bit about
21 how you guys are funded?

22 And I guess was there a decision made

1 a long time ago that no one is going to pay for
2 this information necessarily? And that's not the
3 appropriate way to handle it.

4 MR. LONG: All of Market News money
5 comes to AMS as a block. Something like 33
6 million dollars, I believe. And that's each of
7 the Market News programs, livestock poultry and
8 grain, dairy, cotton and tobacco, and specialty
9 crop market news.

10 So, we're a part of that pool that
11 comes to AMS as an appropriation. Several years
12 ago back, well, a couple decades ago, we were
13 mailing, oh my gosh, untold hundreds of thousands
14 of market reports to people.

15 It was deemed or ruled at that time
16 that having market news, having people collect
17 information, make it publically available, is in
18 the public good. The fact that we print and mail
19 it to your business, is in your good.

20 So, we went to a user fee basis for
21 mailing market reports. So everyone had to pay a
22 subscription to get their market news.

1 Now, of course this was before the
2 days of the internet. So, yes, having market
3 news and collecting all this data to boarders and
4 the market, that was deemed by Congress to still
5 be in the public good.

6 But special services you would have to
7 pay for. So, to this day, if I do a dedicated
8 run for you, go into my database and do multiple
9 years, I am required to charge you like 25
10 dollars a year.

11 Interesting thing, when we started
12 charging people for market reports, initially the
13 number of reports we mailed, dropped by 90
14 percent. I mean, you wanted the information, but
15 hell, you can call market news and get it rather
16 than pay all year long for that time you needed.

17 Obviously we have the internet and not
18 a lot of mailed reports go out. That number came
19 back up to about 30 percent, you know, dropped to
20 like 10 percent and went back up to about 30.

21 So, some percentages of people did
22 decide they were willing to pay for it. You

1 know, listening to a phone recorder of me, my
2 voice, you don't want to do that too often.

3 So does that cover it more?

4 MR. WILLIAMS: And so Terry, it's
5 September 30?

6 MR. LONG: Yes, sir.

7 MR. WILLIAMS: Is when the funding
8 does go out. Now, in the webinar that your group
9 did, it kind of talked about all the enhancements
10 to the online and everything.

11 MR. LONG: Right. Right.

12 MR. WILLIAMS: Is that currently
13 funded?

14 MR. LONG: Through January '18. We're
15 -- to that point we're good.

16 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

17 MR. LONG: At least to the development
18 of MARS. So, with that I thank you for your
19 attention. And the one thing we know in Market
20 News, is we work for you.

21 So, please cooperate with us when you
22 call. Call us down when you think we're not

1 right. And call me if you see things that we can
2 do to help you. So, thank you.

3 (Applause.)

4 MS. MORRIS: So, I just wanted to
5 clarify one thing about the funding. So, AMS
6 does have a, as Bruce talked about earlier,
7 predominantly 70 percent of our budget is user
8 fee.

9 And the other 30 percent, including
10 Market News, is an annual appropriation. So, it's
11 not that we expect that we're not going to get
12 any funding for Market News after September 30.

13 It's just that you know, obviously at
14 this point, the President's budget for next year
15 hasn't been released yet. And ultimately as we
16 all understand, it's up to Congress.

17 We are expecting, as I think every
18 federal agency is, some cuts to be made for sure.
19 But, you know, Market News continues to be one of
20 the agency's top priorities.

21 So, you know, while it's fair to say
22 there will probably be some reduction, I don't

1 want anybody to be, you know, left with the idea
2 that we're saying that, you know, we expect
3 Market News won't be funded moving forward.

4 MR. WILLIAMS: This is Tom Williams
5 again. I'll just read something that -- on the
6 website where it just talks about, where it kind
7 of explains Market News.

8 It says for 100 years AMS has provided
9 free, unbiased price and sales information to
10 assist in the marketing and distribution of farm
11 commodities. Each year Market News issues
12 thousands of reports providing the industry with
13 key wholesale, retail, and shipping data.

14 The report gives farmers, producers,
15 and other agricultural businesses the information
16 they need to evaluate market conditions, identify
17 trends, make purchasing decisions, monitor price
18 patterns, evaluate transportation equipment
19 needs, and accurately assess movement.

20 And as Terry did a nice job of
21 explaining, it's a service to all of us as an
22 industry. And so what my group is tasked to do,

1 and would welcome any input that you have, is put
2 together just a statement proposing and
3 advocating that we do have -- that we do continue
4 the funding.

5 MS. KNORR: Thank you. So, we are
6 ahead of schedule. But I wanted to share a
7 little -- some bits of information before we
8 close for the day.

9 And if I'm correct, the happy hour so
10 to speak, is from 5:00 to 7:00 up in the lobby
11 bar. Is that correct? Okay.

12 But, particularly for the new members,
13 I really encourage you to take a look at, you
14 know, in your packet is the list of the various
15 working groups. And really decide which one you
16 feel most compelled to contribute to.

17 If there's not a group on here that
18 you feel compelled to contribute to, please give
19 some thought to, you know, what are pressing
20 issues that you are facing with your work that
21 you think others maybe facing with their work, to
22 form an additional group.

1 If you choose one of the existing
2 groups, please let the chair or the acting chair
3 know. And then also communicate that information
4 to Marlene so she can add you to the roster.

5 And make sure that when the conference
6 calls that are coordinated between our in person
7 meetings, that you're on that list and can
8 actively participate. So, again, you know, let
9 the chair know and let Marlene know.

10 Again, think about the other programs
11 or issues that are of import to you. And how we
12 can make, you know, recommendations or statements
13 in support of those programs. Or to make
14 suggestions about how we think that they could
15 work better for the fruit and vegetable industry.

16 I am also going to encourage you, you
17 know, with the exception of the food safety
18 group, we don't have any recommendations at this
19 point. So, please get your wheels turning, on
20 how -- you know, what we can pull together.

21 And we do have quite a bit of time
22 dedicated tomorrow to meet with our groups. But

1 get your wheels turning now.

2 There's opportunities again, over
3 happy hour. And also, you know, going out to
4 dinner with our colleagues to discuss, you know,
5 what we think. What we have floating around in
6 our minds to make suggestions on.

7 Because we do have some draft
8 recommendations from the food safety committee.
9 And they are quite meaty.

10 If you have not read them already,
11 please do so this evening. So that we can have a
12 robust conversation about them.

13 And hopefully leave --

14 MR. McREYNOLDS: I would say they're
15 pulpy more than meaty.

16 (Laughter.)

17 MS. KNORR: Thanks. Noted. Yes,
18 please, you know, take some time to read those
19 over so that we can have a good discussion about
20 that. And come to some sort of resolution.

21 It would be wonderful if we could
22 leave at the end of tomorrow's session with, you

1 know, having made some recommendations both with
2 food safety and with other groups.

3 Robert, do you have anything to add
4 before we adjourn today?

5 MR. NOLAN: I think you've done a
6 great job, Beth.

7 MS. KNORR: Thank you. Thank you very
8 much.

9 MR. NOLAN: I've got your back.

10 MS. KNORR: And Marlene, I'm sure you
11 have a few things to add.

12 MS. BETTS: Yes. Just one other
13 thing, Beth. It was kind of a quagmire trying to
14 find and make sure I got all of the working
15 groups.

16 Obviously the ones that we had met
17 with, they were kind of in forefront. And you
18 know, I put the other two on for tomorrow
19 morning.

20 I don't know if there are other groups
21 that I may have missed that might want to
22 participate. I know there was mention about a

1 broadband technology type of a group.

2 Again, I don't think there were many
3 people that I saw that were on the working group
4 and got kind of no feedback when I kind of threw
5 out the lifeline to ask what other working groups
6 were.

7 So, certainly, if -- like you're
8 saying, if there are other groups that I have
9 missed, if people need time to speak or whatever,
10 please feel free in that allotted time. Or I
11 don't know if you want to address that now or
12 whatever.

13 But I apologize if I have missed any
14 groups.

15 MS. KNORR: Yes. Helen and I both
16 participated on a broadband working group. But,
17 have not make much headway in that regard. So,
18 we can just state that we're on hiatus for now.

19 So, yes. I don't have anything else.
20 If Melissa or Marlene?

21 MS. BETTS: Oh, and one other thing on
22 working groups. Because I think there was

1 another working group that was mentioned at the
2 last meeting.

3 I think it was the Tropical Products
4 Grade Standards Group. Or something of that
5 nature. And I reached out to Lucy. And I forget
6 if it was Carlos or George. Jorge?

7 MR. VAZQUEZ: Yes. That was me and
8 Lucy was the chair. And I never heard from her.
9 So, I -- again, I think it's just kind of like in
10 limbo at his moment, so.

11 MS. BETTS: Yes. And I think that
12 would be something that could be worked closely
13 with the Specialty Crafts and Inspection Program.
14 If there is any specific need.

15 So, I kind of dropped that one off.
16 I don't know if that one's just kind of on hold
17 or how you all want to handle that one either.

18 But that is why I didn't list that
19 one. Because I didn't hear back from Lucy
20 either, so.

21 MR. VAZQUEZ: Is she still part of the
22 advisory board?

1 MS. BETTS: Yes. She had a personal
2 commitment that she couldn't make it to this
3 meeting. Leanne, did you want to say something?

4 MS. SKELTON: Yes. The only thing
5 I'll say, if you go back probably a decade or
6 more. I'm aging all of you.

7 (Laughter.)

8 MS. SKELTON: Thank you. There was a
9 recommendation at that time to review all the
10 different grade standards for fresh fruit and
11 vegetable.

12 And the way that worked out was
13 essentially the committee, as Marlene just
14 pointed out, the committee said to specialty crop
15 at the time was fresh products branch, take a
16 look at what's still relevant and what's outdated
17 and needs to be updated.

18 And then one by one by one, go through
19 that and work that process. And so they did
20 that, of course, with the committee knowing
21 what's going on.

22 In this case you might want to try

1 that same route. It worked pretty well. A lot
2 of the standards were revised, brought up to
3 date, that kind of thing.

4 MS. KNORR: And I just do want to give
5 a little bit of a nudge. I think most of our
6 working groups do a good job of this.

7 But, you know, make sure that you
8 actively reach out to Marlene and to the others
9 on your committee to start scheduling those
10 conference calls and that kind of thing. So
11 that, you know, when we meet next we do have, you
12 know, some idea of what we need to discuss.

13 And how we can -- if we have drafts to
14 work from, that's usually very helpful to, you
15 know, have the full group discuss those potential
16 recommendations.

17 So, jut encouraging everybody, giving
18 you a gentle, loving nudge, to make sure you're
19 communicating with Marlene, to make sure that
20 those groups are meeting in between. Okay.

21 MR. NICHOLSON: Beth, I just want to
22 make one quick comment. I apologize. I'm going

1 to have to leave before the other business
2 section tomorrow.

3 And I just wanted to mention a
4 conversation that's going on. It's more RMA
5 related. You know, in the east and obviously
6 other regions, we are facing -- continuing to
7 face a lot of weather challenges.

8 Our farm in particular in 2012 lost
9 three-quarters of our apple crop. This past
10 season we lost two thirds of our apple crop due
11 to the drought.

12 And there's obviously in other
13 regions, these kind of more frequent losses. The
14 conversation that's going on right now is, well,
15 now the east coast apple program may be looking
16 at not being -- having enough funding.

17 And they're having to look at what we
18 actually are paying now in crop insurance
19 premiums. And they could be looking at a
20 doubling of those.

21 So, it's, you know, not AMS, it's RMA.
22 But it is a topic that affects all of us. And I

1 just wanted to mention it because I don't know if
2 other regions are having those conversations with
3 RMA.

4 And that we've got a lot of loss here
5 now in other areas too. So, just a comment, a
6 topic to be aware of. And maybe at some point
7 we'll be having more conversations on it.

8 I guess that's how we start happy
9 hour.

10 (Laughter.)

11 MS. KNORR: Well, before we fully
12 adjourn, I wonder if anybody else has any topics
13 that they've been kind of holding onto that they
14 think are ones that the group should discuss?

15 The crop insurance? Yes. I think
16 that that's -- yes.

17 MS. HERRON: I would say that we need
18 to revive the labor committee as well.

19 MS. KNORR: Okay. Well, if nobody
20 else has anything for the good of the cause, then
21 we should adjourn for the evening. And we'll see
22 everyone back here at 8:30 tomorrow morning.

1 Check out is at 11:00?

2 MS. BETTS: I think that is right.

3 Let me double check.

4 MS. KNORR: I think checkout is at
5 11:00. So if you want to do that before you come
6 down here, or during a quick break tomorrow, just
7 keep that in mind.

8 MS. BETTS: And maybe with everybody
9 having flights and stuff out in the morning,
10 instead of having the photograph at the end,
11 maybe we can do it in the beginning.

12 MS. KNORR: Okay.

13 MS. BETTS: Get that knocked out. And
14 then people can get on their way.

15 MS. KNORR: Yes. Wonderful.

16 MS. BETTS: We need a new picture on
17 our website.

18 MS. KNORR: Wonderful. Thanks
19 everybody, have a good night.

20 MS. BETTS: Thanks for everything.

21 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
22 went off the record at 4:38 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

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Advisory Committee Meeting

Before: USDA

Date: 05-09-17

Place: Arlington, VA

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